2019/20

Homoeroticism in Contemporary Fashion Advertising

Kang-Yeh Lee

A Thesis entitled

Homoeroticism in Contemporary Fashion Advertising

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the increasingly frequent appearance and explicitness of homoerotic images in mainstream fashion media, both on digital platforms and in traditional spreads. This phenomenon is not yet extensively covered in fashion research, and therefore certainly worth investigating. The central question is how and to what end exactly is homoeroticism encoded and presented in contemporary fashion advertisements. Research material consists of both textual and visual materials through which a genealogy of homoeroticism in contemporary fashion advertising is constructed, framed by research literature pertaining to visual culture, sexual politics, the male body and homosexuality. By positioning homoerotic images at the junction of discourses on sexuality, masculinity and fashion advertising, a theoretical framework is established for the investigation of the meanings of homoeroticism in fashion advertisements. This thesis conducts in-depth analysis on four fashion advertisements published between 2010 and 2017. By adopting a Foucauldian perspective on the body and subjectivity in contemporary consumer culture, as well as considering the possibility of a 'gay gaze' in visual culture, this thesis suggests that the continued sexualisation of the male body in mass media has eroded the categorical boundaries separating heterosexual and homosexual men. Signs openly connoting homosexual desire permeate contemporary fashion advertisements. This thesis shows that contemporary fashion brands and advertisers now address the gay customer openly, instead of employing so-called 'double marketing strategies.' The graphic layout of the thesis is that of a fashion magazine, to suggest how bodies, genders and sexualities are transformed into visual language. In doing so, the thesis shows how an understanding of the body as 'homoerotic' is mediated, and how visuals and the graphic layouts are central to the interpretation of homoeroticism in fashion images.

Keywords: fashion advertising, homoeroticism, gay gaze, male body, spornosexual, Calvin Klein, Palomo Spain

Supervisor

Annamari Vänskä

Advisers

Annamari Vänskä and Chris Vidal Tenomaa

Master's Programme in Fashion, Clothing and Textile Design

Department of Design

School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Aalto University

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INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry is well known for promoting goods and communicating with target markets through sensational imagery. In an image from the Calvin Klein Jeans 2015 Fall/Winter campaign (*figure 1.*) featuring solo figures, straight couples, male-male and female-female pairs, the primary scene shows two young men looking at one another intimately. The man on the left of the image gently holds the back of the other man's neck, with an simulated dating app chat window at left corner of the image implying that they had just been 'sexting' with one another. The homoeroticism in this campaign was not just following some trend of building a 'gay-friendly' corporate image adopted by high-profile retailers like JC Penny or Target. Such statement campaigns are generally more family-oriented and not indicative of any explicit sexual overtone. Such sanitised promotion materials attempt to emphasise the similarity between homosexuals and heterosexuals by focusing on domesticated desire and the homo-nuclear family. On the contrary, the campaign by Calvin Klein Jeans demonstrates how a fashion brand can orchestrate and manipulate homosexual identity and erotic appeal into their advertising. In this campaign, there is no need to hide the explicit implication of a sexual act between two same sex individuals. While fashion brands and publishers have been playing with the implications of gender and sexuality since the early twentieth century, it was not until the 1980s that the general public began to witness an increase in the objectification of male bodies, and later sexuality, in the advertising of some fashion spreads (Chapman, 1988; Jobling, 1999; 2014; Mort, 1988; 1996; Nixon, 1996). It is clear that the Calvin Klein Jeans advertisement was directly aimed at the brand's gay customers, and even at a wider gay audience. On one hand, the blatant homoeroticism on display, reinforced by the screenshot of the sext, challenged heteronormative preconceptions of erotic visuals in fashion advertising. On the other hand, the mock dating app chat represents a new generation of consumers whose lives are deeply and widely influenced by digital and social media. While this campaign is explicitly sexual and includes the exchange of sexually explicit messages between two men, it did not generate much discussion or controversy. This is in stark contrast to the first homoerotic underwear campaign rolled out by Calvin Klein in 1983, in which almost all the posters put up at New York City bus stops were stolen overnight (Bordo, 1999; McDowell, 1997). How to explain the increasingly frequent appearance and explicitness of homoerotic images in mainstream fashion media, both on digital platforms and in traditional spreads is a question that bears asking, but not one yet extensively covered in fashion research fields.

A great amount of work has been put into studies on advertising and the function of sex in advertising, from investigations of whether sex really sells to analyses of how different sexual referents work in advertising (Reichert, 2003). Whilst these studies might include fashion advertisements in their research, the context of fashion and fashion imagery has been neglected or overlooked in pursuit of a broader scope of advertising. Meanwhile, a growing body of literature has focused on the discourse of fashion, which was once perceived as trivial and hence unworthy of academic attention (Barnard, 2002; Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Craik, 1994; Davis, 1992; Entwistle, 2000; Wilson, 2003). It is, nevertheless, unsatisfactory that most studies in the field of fashion focus primarily on investigations of how fashion practices create and communicate meaning at the interpersonal, social and cultural levels. Amongst these studies, a number of authors have shown critical attention to mediated fashion imagery. Different academic directions and research scopes have been taken, and this development has therefore fed into the multi-disciplinary overlap of fashion studies, cultural studies and communication studies. Such works have constituted increasing advances in the field of fashion studies, with some focusing on fashion photography (Aspers, 2006; Barron-Duncan, 2017; Kismaric & Respini, 2008; Maynard, 2009; Shinkle, 2008; Triggs, 1992), while others attempt to investigate fashion advertising (Edwards, 1997; Jobling, 1999; 2014; Merskin, 2006; Mort, 1988; 1996; 1996; Nixon, 1997; Ricciardelli, Clow, & White, 2010; Rinallo, 2007; Sender, 2005; Soldow, 2006; Vänskä, 2005; 2017a). Although all of these works involve, to various extents, discourses on gender and sexuality, two of the most essential aspects of fashion, only a few writers have dealt specifically with homoeroticism in fashion images or commercials. Jobling (1999) inspected the ambiguity of the phallic male body in fashion images through the psychoanalytic lens; Vänskä (2005) criticised heteronormative understandings of spectatorship and investigated lesbian desires in fashion advertising through the perspective of the femme gaze; Soldow (2006) employed the idea of body beautiful and androgynous marketing to examine the male-homoeroticism embedded in Abercrombie & Fitch campaigns. Apart from these few works, there is still a lack of research as to how homoeroticism operates in fashion advertising.

To untangle the complicated network of how homoeroticism functions in contemporary fashion advertising, one question must be answered first: what does *homoeroticism* in contemporary fashion advertising mean? According to the Oxford Online Dictionary, homoeroticism is the nominalisation of the adjective 'homoerotic,' meaning 'concerning or arousing sexual desire centred on a person of the same sex' ("Homoerotic," n.d.). In other words, a homoerotic fashion advertisement titillates readers by the *homo-sexual referents* within it. In this thesis, fashion advertisement is used in a broad sense to include both promotional materials produced by commercial brands and editorial images published by fashion periodicals, websites and photographers. The underwear campaigns of Calvin Klein, which feature semi-nude models, are exemplar of homoerotic fashion images to consumers.

However, not all sexual referents areas easily identifiable to readers as the naked body of a model. Conceptualising homoeroticism is essential to this study because only with this development of knowledge can one investigate and assess the homoerotic signs in fashion campaigns. Before proceeding to examine multifaceted homoeroticism, it will also be necessary to articulate how an abstract idea like homoeroticism can be identified and interpreted by readers. Whilst homoeroticism can refer to any form of sexual desire between persons of the same sex, this thesis does not engage with female-female eroticism because media representations of female-female intimacy are wholly distinct from male-male one. Throughout this thesis, the term homoeroticism will refer to textual or visual elements carrying notions of male-male sexual desires. Another important caveat necessary to note regarding the geographical and cultural scope of this thesis is that it is beyond the scope of this thesis to inspect fashion advertisements across cultures whose intercultural context belongs to the field of comparative cultural studies. Therefore, the systems of fashion and fashion advertising mentioned in this investigation exist predominantly within Western culture, particularly the cultures of North American and Western European countries.

The central question of this study asks how homoeroticism is encoded and presented in contemporary fashion advertisements. Also included within the investigative reach of this thesis is the operation of homoerotic visual codes in these fashion images and their relationships to representational systems of sexuality and masculinity. To address these questions, a body of literature relating to fashion advertising, the male body, masculinity and visual culture will be examined and discussed. In this thesis, there are three key aspects to the assessment of homoerotic fashion images, aiming to explore how such images operate in contemporary fashion advertising. They are (i) applications of semiotics in the study of visual communication, (ii) marketing and advertising strategies for menswear fashion, and (iii) representations of gender, sexuality, and masculinity in fashion campaigns. It is critical to position homoerotic fashion imagery at the junction of these discourses due to the layered and complex relationships it has with different social identities and institutions. This thesis will thus first develop a theoretical argument about the operation of homoeroticism within these discourses before conducting a visual analysis of selected fashion images.

The overall structure of this thesis takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. Chapter two begins by laying out the theoretical dimensions of the study and looks at how images can generate meaning and communicate with readers. Accordingly, this chapter starts with a brief introduction to the semiotic model of communication studies. Whether from the perspective of structuralism or poststructuralism, decoding the semiotic structure of an image is the predominant modus operandi for studying fashion advertisements due to its ability to reveal the power structure and cultural meaning behind fashion imagery. Following this,, the chapter moves on to discuss the relationships between fashion advertising and social constructs of gender and sexuality. The third chapter aims to develop the theoretical dimensions of this thesis, focusing on two key themes that construct the idea of homoeroticism: *the male body* and *masculinity*. Discourse on the male body stems from the development of sex politics in Western culture in the twentieth century and its influence on fashion photography and advertising. Through the examination of two fashionable male archetypes in the fashion industry, *New Man* and *metrosexual* (on the discussion regarding New Man, see Chapman, 1988; Edwards, 1997; Mort, 1988; 1996; Nixon, 1996; on the discussion regarding metrosexual, see Ervin, 2011; Sender, 2005; Shugart, 2008; Simpson, 1994), this thesis will address the discourse of masculinity within contemporary consumer and visual culture. Chapter four is concerned with the manners in which the desires of gay men have been incorporated and intertwined within fashion advertisements since the 1980s. In order to establish an historical context for the visualisation of homosexual desire, this chapter begins by discussing the fashion and mannerism of Castro clone, which had lasting and profound impacts on the homoerotic aesthetics that have been employed by fashion industry ever since. In addition, to construct viewpoints supported by poststructuralism and postmodernism, a more dynamic and inclusive take on spectatorship and gaze will be elaborated on in this chapter. Chapter five presents four visual analyses, with each one focusing on a different theme: bromance, spornosexuality, the aesthetics of camp and sexting. In this chapter, this thesis will investigate and contextualise homoerotic charges encoded in advertising through various angles to establish a more comprehensive understandings of how homoeroticism can be detected and felt by different readers. In addition, this chapter includes a discussion of the limitations of this investigation and identifies areas for further research. The final chapter is the conclusion, which includes a brief summary of this study as well as a critique of its findings.

FASHION AS IMAGE

One of the most powerful vehicles employed by fashion industry to convey different codes is the visual presentation of fashion items. Fashion brands and advertisers use photographs, motion pictures, texts and window displays to communicate with their customers. Through visual representation, brands and advertisers acquire the ability to transmit messages to consumers. Moreover, by adopting existing gender codes into campaigns, fashion advertising helps to reinforce social constructs of gender and sexuality and their promotion and regulation by the society. By linking signs to genders, fashion advertising establishes a system of visual representation for gender. While dominant classes and institutions may be perceived as the one who dictate and regulate the behaviours and fashion styles of the people, the power of retailers and advertisers cannot be ignored or neglected in academia.

Photographs, among all visual presentations, may be the most imperative medium that communicate, conform, challenge and break the conventional gender and sexual codes in capitalist, industrial societies, occupying 'the public space of representation, establishing and maintaining identity in visual representation' (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 30). Barnard (2002) claims that fashion photography is 'one of the most powerful media for creating and communicating images of men and women' (p. 117). In the form of advertising, it generally helps to reinforce and limit possible representations of gender and sexuality. Because it is effective and compelling in structuring feminine and masculine consumption, fashion imagery is thus the very medium by which many brands and publishers create homoerotic visuals that revolt against conventional perceptions of gender and sexuality.

Many scholars (Barnard, 2007; Barthes, 1990; Bordo, 1999; Craik, 1994; Jobling, 1999; McDowell, 1997; Triggs, 1992) have suggested that while some may regard fashion photography as a documenting tool that reflects changes in social attitudes towards the gender and sexuality in Western culture, it is also the works of rebellious and anti-establishment fashion designers and photographers that play pivotal roles in changing the public's perception of gender and sexuality, and likewise its conception of masculinity. Fashion advertisers and photographers can, on one hand, certainly deploy the regulatory norms of gender and sexuality in their works to reinforce stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, heterosexuality and homosexuality. On the other hand, they can also act as rulebreakers against established social constructs of gender and sexuality. To understand what role fashion advertising plays in the evolution of society's perceptions of gender, sexuality and masculinity, one needs to first look into how a fashion image 'talks' to readers. The semiotic approach, Davis (1992) suggests, has the capability to unravel the process of meaning production and communication in fashion systems. The 'seminal notion of code,' which functions as 'the binding ligament in the shared understandings that comprise a sphere of discourse,' provides a probable scope to explore the process of meaning generation in fashion systems (Davis, 1992, p. 5). This view is supported by Barnard (2002), who writes that fashion is a form of cultural production in which meanings are produced and exchanged because 'each reader brings their own cultural experience and expectations to bear in the garment' (p. 31). The meaning of fashion is therefore generated by means of the encoding and decoding processes described in the semiotic model.

This chapter begins with an introduction to how fashion images communicate meanings to readers by employing semiotics. It then moves on to address a philosophical movement stemming from the concept of semiotics – structuralism and its relation to the conception of the dichotomous gender system in western cultures. Both semiotics and structuralism have contributed to major changes in social studies since the twentieth century and in fields related to fashion and visual communication studies. The third section presents critical responses to the structuralist interpretation of visual communication from the perspective of poststructuralism, particularly how meanings are generated through readers' individual negotiations with images during the process of visual communication. Finally, the last section of this chapter draws upon poststructuralism to discuss how identities like sexuality and masculinity can be negotiated and constructed *in* and *via* fashion advertisements.

2.1.

How does an image talk? Semiotic explanation of visual communication

Semiotics, simply put, is the study of signs. It is based on Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure's linguistic theory stating that human language can be divided into two essential features: the *signifier* and the *signified*. A signifier is 'the signs image as we perceive it,' and the signified is the abstract concept the signifier refers to (Fiske, 2011). Take the word 'jeans' for example. In the English language, the signifier for jeans could be either the written letters 'j-e-a-n-s' or the spoken sound /jēnz/. The abstract concept of jeans is the one that being referenced. This explanation of how language operates might sound too obvious for it to become a significant theory in linguistic and communication studies. Nevertheless, the reason that de Saussure's theory broke new ground was the idea that there was no necessary and natural connection between the signifier and the signified. The spoken word 'jeans' is not tangible and does not 'sound' like a pair of jeans. In the same manner, while the written word of 'jeans' has its form, it does not 'look' like the jeans itself. In other words, neither the spoken nor the written word of 'jeans' is a pair of jeans. They are both signifiers which humans have invented for communicating the signified. Therefore, they are artificially constructed by people, and in a broader sense, the culture which those people inhabited (Fiske, 2011; Hall, 1997).

A sign consists of the signifier and the signified. The former is the physical existence of a sign and the latter is the mental, abstract concept of a sign. The construction process of a relationship between a sign and the external existence of an object or meaning is called *signification*. Both the construction of signs and the process of signifying are culturally situated. Hence, for the system of semiotics to work, one prerequisite is a shared understanding of the cultural or social context. Without it, individuals from different cultural or social groupings would not have the capability to decode and decipher a sign. For instance, in Mandarin Chinese, the word '**牛仔褲**' is used to indicate the item 'jeans.' Neither its pronunciation /niúzǎikù/ nor its written form is similar to the English term 'jeans.' Therefore, an English speaking person with no Mandarin Chinese skills would not be able to understand the meaning, the signified, of the word '**牛仔褲**' when it appears. In addition, semioticians see no difference in the interpreting process of the decoder and encoder. This results in the decoder's active and creative position, meaning that the decoder interprets the signs based on his or her own knowledge and experience (Fiske, 2011). Because decoding signs is a culture-specific technique, anyone who is not familiar with the culture is very often unable to interpret or even notice the meaning of signs.

Another characteristic of the relationship between the signifier and the signified is that there can be several signifiers implying the same abstract concept or even one signifier suggesting many ideas. The relationship between the signifier and the signified is not exclusive nor is it stable or everlasting. There could be numerous signifiers that refer to the exact same signified concept. For instance, a sleeveless shirt could be called a 'wife-beater' or 'tank-top' in the United States, and 'vest' or 'singlet' in the United Kingdom. Not only do signifiers change across cultures, signifieds can also change. The concept of 'saving face' in a Taiwanese cultural context might not be completely comprehended by a foreigner even when the person already knows how to pronounce or write the word in Mandarin Chinese. Because the construction of the sign system is situated in culture, both the link between signifier and signified and the process of signification are subject to changes within or across cultures.

If the connection between sign and signified is entirely artificially created, it means that possible combinations are infinite. How then could a person still recognise a sign and its meaning without being confused by other possible combinations. According to de Saussure, signs are divided and categorised by boundaries, and the difference between signs is exactly how one can identify the signified meaning. These boundaries are constructed artificially by a social group or a culture. Therefore within a larger system of communication, the meaning of a particular sign lies in its relationship to other signs. Under the perspective of semiotics, it is the relationships and differences between signs that determine the meaning of the signification. Thus, in semiotics, not only is meaning based on a sign's differentiation, it is also subjected to change on the basis of its relationship to other signs established by humans.

Meaning is not an absolute, static concept to be found neatly parcelled up in the message. Meaning is an active process. … Negotiation is perhaps the most useful in that it implies the to-and-fro, the give-and-take between person and message. Meaning is the result of the dynamic interaction between sign, interpretant, and object: it is historically located and may well change with time. (Fiske, 2011, p. 46)

The negotiating process that is the construction of the meaning of a text, many fashion writers have contended, is why semiotics is a more efficient model for analysing fashion communication (Barnard, 2002; Davis, 1992). The emphasis on 'negotiation' in the communication of meanings implies that this is why groups from different cultural or social backgrounds may interpret the same fashion item or image differently.

Although de Saussure's main works were mostly centred on the system of language, the semiotic model has been adopted by others in fields like art, film, advertising and fashion for its capacity to investigate non-linguistic signs.

Signs are organized into languages and it is the existence of common languages which enable us to translate our thoughts (concepts) into words, sounds or image, and then to use these, operating as a language, to express meanings and communicates thoughts to other people. … Any sound, word, image or object which functions as a sign, and is organized with other signs into a system which is capable of carrying and expressing meaning is, from this point of view, 'a language'. (Hall, 1997, p. 18-19)

The meaning of a fashion image, like any kind of language, is not then naturally given. It is instead produced by all participants – the author and the reader – in a specific cultural context and at a particular time. In the process of producing meanings, a system of representations is established by human beings. This system uses language, signs or images to '*refer to* either the "real" world of objects, people or events, or indeed to imaginary worlds of fictional objects, people and events' (Hall, 1997, p. 17). By referring, representation becomes an essential component linking conceptual maps and the system of signs. A system of representation hence cultivates and establishes a complicated and sophisticated conceptual network enabling those with shared cultural backgrounds to communicate with one another. Through investigation of representations in text, images or other kinds of signs, one can make sense of their cultural meanings.

In his book *The Fashion System* (1967), French semiotician Roland Barthes examines how the fashion industry uses advertising and text to construct a system loaded with bourgeois ideologies. Although Barthes focuses more on text than on the visual side of fashion advertising, his research is nevertheless exemplary of how fashion advertising can be understood and investigated within a system of signs and representations. To further explain how this works, Barthes has categorised signification into two orders, the first one being *denotation,* and the second one being *connotation*. Denotation is what this thesis has been discussed before; it is 'the relationship between the signifier and signified within the sign, and of the sign with its referent in external reality' (Fiske, 2011, p. 85). According to this order of signification, the signifier implies 'the obvious,' for example, a white tank-top means a real, white, knitted sleeveless shirt. However, it is the second order of signification that offers many social scientists and fashion scholars a tool by which to decode the meaning of fashion and fashion imagery.

Although in Barthes' theoretical framework, there are three means as to how this second order of signification operates (*connotation*, *myth* and *metaphor*), this thesis does not intend to delve into the distinctions between these operations. Instead, throughout this thesis, connotation is used to refer to the general operation of the second order of signification. Connotative meaning occurs when 'the sign meets the feelings or emotions of the users and the values of their culture' (Fiske, 2011). Connotation concerns the way in which to encode and decode the meaning of a sign, and therefore works on a subjective level. It can be interpreted on the personal and social level, and may be confined to a specific culture or social grouping. A kilt has a particular meaning in Gaelic culture, for example, its tartan pattern connotes the wearer's identity and heritage. It does not generate the same meaning when it is perceived by people who are not part of the Gaelic culture. Take the white tank-top as another example, referred to by the slang 'wife-beater' because of the 'stereotypical association of such shirts with men who abuse their wives' ("Wifebeater," n.d.). This connotative meaning is closely associated with American culture and a slang is used mostly by Americans. As a result, wife-beater might only carry its denotative meaning, which refers to a perpetrator of domestic violence, to readers outside of American culture. Because the sign system is situated in and moulded by culture, the meanings generated from within the system, both denotative and connotative, are culturally situated.

The idea that meanings are culturally situated gives birth to a new movement in sociology and philosophy – structuralism. The introduction of structuralism to humanity studies underlined the significance of social and cultural structures in constructing a person's understanding of the world. More importantly, it contended that instead of biological dispositions, gender, sexuality and other identities were socially constructed. Furthermore, the connotative links between fashion imagery and gender in fashion advertising resulted in shaping and shifting people's perception of social constructs. By encoding conventional norms, both in body decoration and body movement, fashion advertising creates a dreamlike visual world regulated by the prevailing norms. This makes consumers believing that by adhering to these regulations, they can become *the* ideal model captured by the camera. In the next section, this thesis will address structuralism and its relation to gender constructs in fashion and fashion advertising.

2.2.

Structuralism and the construction of gender in fashion advertising

According to de Saussure, it is the boundaries and relationships between signs that help humans to identify and distinguish them from one another, and also to generate meanings from these differences. While potential combinations of different words in any language are indefinite, only a certain number of them make sense to users of the language. In other words, only with a specific syntax and in a specific grammatical arrangement can one understand the meaning of the combination of words. Some philosophers and sociologists have taken this concept and applied it on a macro level. They argue that there is an underlying structure in every field in the universe, just like the grammatical structure of a language. For this reason, such scholars are given the name 'structuralist'. For structuralists, a structure is observable and thus may be studied; structures are also very narrow and limited if one compares it to alternative indefinite possibilities for combinations. 'While structuralism does not deny the existence of an external, universal reality, it does deny the possibility of human beings having access to this reality in an objective, universal, non-culturally-determined manner' (Fiske, 2011, p. 107). This challenged the traditional understanding of subjectivity in which humans are free and autonomous thinkers, as well as the idea of scientific rationalism which had been the dominant thought in western society at the time. In this regard, an individual is an instantiation of the culture into which he or she was born, namely that an individual's identities, ideologies, preferences and biases are all given by the culture and the time period that the individual lives in. The idea of a person's sense of self is hence not a self-made achievement, but a culturally learned and constructed one.

From the standpoint of structuralism, not only is one's understanding of gender socially constructed, but also one's approval or disapproval of certain gendered behaviour or attributes. This is because gender is a part of a person's identity. In other words, gender attributes of an individual are primarily constructed by, learned from and regulated by the society or the social grouping to which they belong. They are the result of one's socialisation and conformity with cultural conventions. Corresponding to the fact that all signs are subjected to changes, the perception of gender in a culture is inevitably unfixed, unstable and inconsistent (Sánchez, Greenberg, Liu, & Vilain, 2009; Connell, R. W., 1992). It is not rare that gender behaviour, codes, markers and mores differ from or contradict to one another through different historical periods and across different cultures. Indeed, unlike biological sex, the concept of gender and its characteristics, in particular those not related to biological dispositions, are commonly varied across different cultures and over times; most of them are susceptible to shifts in social conventions, political atmosphere and cultural landscape.

From this perspective, fashion is also a part of the formation of one's sense of gendered self. Through fashion and dressing, a wearer encodes non-discursive signs, no matter how elusive and ambiguous they are, for viewers to decode. Fashion becomes a technique by which individuals express, reflect, identify and negotiate their social identities like gender, race, class, sexuality and nationality. It is a technique by which to assemble, encrypt and construct a person's subjectivity. That readers are capable of interpreting and understanding a fashion look, text or image is, as structuralists believe, due to the deeper structure that shapes the individual's sense of world. This structure is not naturally given whatsoever; it is artificially constructed by those within the community. To many structuralists, this is indicative of possibilities for power play and power distribution within the structure. Authorities such as religious institutions, governments and schools have the power to dictate how individuals form their perceptions of the world. This power play amongst social structures has become a major research topic in the social sciences. The power of authority is not limited to entities with legal status like governments or schools. Institutions in consumer spheres, such as advertising agencies, media companies and retail stores, are all equipped with their own power over what femininity and masculinity is. Thus, an individual's sense of gendered self is shaped not only by definitions in a textbook, but likewise by mannequins in department stores or models in fashion prints.

Fashion has become a means by which authority, advertisers and magazine editors construct and reinforce gender regulations. For example, sombreness in men's fashion has only been in ascendancy for the last two centuries. Merchandisers and tailors only adopted the phenomenon of strictly divided and gendered fashion in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Scholars suggest that the main reason for this development was a result of the 'ascendancy of the bourgeoisie' and industrialised society, in which the priority of men was to produce, command, trade and provide, while women were expected to oversee domestic tasks and raise offspring (Craik, 1994; Davis, 1992). In addition, writings from some philosophers such as Rousseau, who stated that for women, raising children was the nature-assigned task and the household is where they belonged, were influential in the elimination of femininity from the public and political spheres encompassing both European and North American countries (Solomon-Godeau, 1997). The division of the public and domestic spheres, therefore, led to the creation of different disciplines and regulations on clothing and body. Protestant values were highlighted through men's fashion that signified utility, sombreness and functionality. On the other hand, women's dresses were often frivolous, exhibitionist and attractive (to their husband) (Davis, 1992). A new fashion mould was created, with gendered clothes which matched the gendered roles that were being promoted and encouraged by a network consisting of bourgeois society, Protestant beliefs and the capitalist system. Such was advertised by etiquette books, women's magazines, department stores and mainstream media. The responsibility of acting as a template for sexual fantasy now predominantly lied in the woman's body, while the man's body was built for work and politics. By the middle of the nineteenth century, this conformity in dress, and likewise in body, had already been widely accepted as a part of social regulation (Geczy & Karaminas, 2013).

The promulgation and reinforcement of this gender role dichotomy and the idea of normative sexuality would not have been successful without the help of advertising agencies. Colour choices for children clothes are an epitome of how the fashion industry and marketers establish the legitimacy of gender division starting from childhood, for example, the idea that pink should be perceived as a girly colour, blue is reserved for boys. In contrast to the modern marketing and consumption patterns, researchers in costume and fashion history reveal that before twentieth century, in fact, blue was more associated with girls and women while the colours pink and red were more commonly used by boys and men (Vänskä, 2017a). Advertisements function by invoking the viewer's recognition and identification of the meaning-loaded iconography found within. By displaying stereotypical properties of masculinity and femininity, advertisements operate according to a system of difference (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). The meaning of gender is generated through the relationship between masculinity and femininity. In other words, if one applies the theory of de Saussure, the semiotic meaning of masculinity arises from its opposition to femininity. Fashion campaigns, by over-exaggerating only the masculine or feminine side of models, or by juxtaposing masculine and feminine activities, create visual arenas in which consumers identify with or dismiss the dualistic iconography of gender attributes. By swarming the consumer market with a legion of gendered goods and advertisements, the fashion industry and advertisers are actively involved in the construction of gendered patterns and social tensions, as opposed to passively reacting to them (Edwards, 1997). Structuralism's explanation of social constructs, and more importantly, gender and sexuality in fashion and fashion advertising is problematic, however, because of the overdetermined and fixed interpretations it presents, leaving little to no room for the individual to resist. In other words, the structuralist approach to visual communication lacks human agency, and thus renders itself unsatisfactory and insufficient when it comes to the current investigation.

2.3.

Poststructuralism and the negotiation of meaning

In the last two sections, this thesis addressed the importance of semiotics in communication studies and its versatility in probing non-linguistic signs. In addition, structuralism was briefly discussed, a philosophical movement that developed from semiotics, along with its employment in the understanding of gender. Since the enlightenment era, mainstream western philosophy had contended that humans are capable of thinking independently and acting on their own will. It was not until nineteenth century that some writers started arguing that human thought processes and behaviour are affected by forces beyond their control. As part of this new development, structuralism grew acclaimed for pointing out the significance of the underlying, abstract social structures which have profound influence on human behaviour, ideologies and subjectivity. Structuralism questions the idea of complete free choice and human agency, and believes that by studying conceptual social structures and systems of power, one can finally understand how human beings make sense of their lives.

Structuralists were, however, soon criticised for their overestimation of the text and neglect of the fact that readers are an equally essential factor in the communication and generation of meaning. The purpose of structuralism is to uncover the relationships between textual structure and social structure using semiotics. Therefore, its focus is on the macro level, looking at how the power is distributed in larger systems like society, culture and community. While semiotic and structuralist approaches allow multiple readings to be extracted from the same text, their limitation lies in their predominant focus on the process of signification that demonstrating how 'a society organizes itself and the ways its members have of making sense of themselves and of their social experience' (Fiske, 2011, p. 126). This resulted in structuralism being attacked by many for its intention to find the unified structure underlying every field, and its rigid explanation of the relationship between signs and the signifieds. While the process of encoding and reading in human communication is influenced, regulated or constructed culturally, it is nonetheless up to the readers to decide what exactly a symbol means to them. For example, the stiletto has been denounced by many feminists as a manifestation of a patriarchal power structure, yet there are some women and non-heterosexuals who do find wearing stilettos to be an empowering experience (Wright, 2007). Stilettos, in this case, indicate two opposing concepts to two different groups of people; two contradictory accounts of meanings inhabited the same object. Instead of the author, or the designer, marketer or sale assistant, the legitimacy of this meaning stems from the reader or the wearer themself. There may be an interpretation of what a stiletto means that is dominant in society and promoted by the authority, yet this explanation is not universal.

Many critics of structuralism were later known as poststructuralists. In poststructuralism, the analytical scope has shifted from the author to the reader. While the general social structure is still an essential factor in determining how meaning is constructed, it is nevertheless the individual's negotiation process that most intrigues poststructuralists. From the perspective of poststructuralism, a reader's interpretation of a message becomes, if not more important, at least equal to the author's intention. Although the decoding process of a reader or a viewer is still highly influenced by the culture and society in which they are situated, it is inevitable that multiple interpretations will be generated, and that of these interpretation are legitimate.

The content of any media image… – fictional or factual, fantastic or journalistic – cannot be reliably predicted to have any effect in isolation from the context of its reception by real people in their physical and social environments. What any particular image means, and what it may predispose, provoke, or persuade someone to think or do are as much the product of that individual's personal circumstances (an infinitely complex amalgam of individual and familial story, education, cultural tradition, and all the other elements which shape and constrain a person's existence and conscious being) as they are of the image-content. The lines of cause and effect between media text, individual consciousness and social action are dependent on too many variables to be reliably known. (McNair, 2002, p. 8)

This leads to the conflicting tensions and contradictory ideologies coexisting within the same sign, message, text or image. The meaning which a single person extracts from a signifier is based on that person's own culturally and arbitrarily constructed sense of self, including their subjectivity, ideologies and identities. Therefore, a fashion image must be examined on both macro level of social structure and micro level of each viewer's everyday life. A fashion image can be interpreted in varied ways and hence carries a myriad of meanings. If the producer of a fashion advertisement encodes a specific meaning or ideology in it, it does not guarantee that viewers will decode signs in accordance with the producer's intention. That is not to say that the reader or viewer is immune to the cultural structure in which they live. In fact, the opposite might be true. Identities such as gender, race and class, and the associations between these identities and certain personal attributes and characteristics are indeed socially and culturally constructed. It is nonetheless critical to remember that even within the same social structure, each individual interprets and negotiates meaning differently from one another.

'The way that sex is expressed culturally, through gender, is in large part a product of socialisation, overlaid and personalised with elements of individual creativity and lifestyle choice' (McNair, 2002, p. 3). It follows that this is also reflected in how people fashion their bodies by using techniques that comply with or revolt against social expectations, regulations, and disciplines (Davis, 1992; Wilson, 2003). Davis (1992) suggests that clothing communicates ideas of social identity, which we are active participants in constructing and reticulating. These identities are framed by 'strong collective currents that impinge on our sense of self at different times during our lives and at different historical moments' (Davis, 1992, p. 17). Social identities are neither stable nor fixed, hence the continual creation of ambiguous and contentious margins among the shifting and changing identities. Fashion, fitting into gaps of a number of indeterminacies, is then employed by individuals to address their personal and collective tensions. Representations and meanings in fashion are reverberations of different instabilities, which form the 'collective tensions and moods' of Western society. Accordingly, these extreme tensions between conflicting and incompatible identities and ideologies such as gender, class, and status, are invested and inscribed substantially in fashion practices (Craik, 1994). As a means to constitute representations of one's identities, fashion therefore feeds into these instabilities of identities. In other words, fashion in Western culture is prompted by the recurrent tensions incubated by ambivalences between different identities, in a way which is almost infinite as Western culture becomes more and more complicated and heterogeneous. Hence, the continuous change and shift in styles and in the meaning of these styles constitute a dynamic and organic fashion system.

The meaning of fashion, be it object, act or image, is created, transmitted and perceived differently by the individual viewer because the production of meaning is a non-static process. The relationships between fashion, wearer and viewer are always shifting and in motion. A pair of Levi's 501 jeans could thus be conceived as more than just a tribute to the American Wild West. It is also an iconographic item representing macho masculinity, and was a homoerotic symbol to many gay men in the 1970s and 80s. From a poststructuralist's point of view, there is no single, universal explanation for anything; everything can be interpreted variously by different readers. Such flexibility and inclusivity not only underlines a person's agency, but also create space in which ambiguity and ambivalence may exist. Davis (1992) points out that, as a consequence of the ambiguous and ambivalent characteristics of fashion, 'codes' in fashion communication are always unstable and constantly shifting. Commenting on the idea that meaning in fashion is consistently unstable, Craik (1994) further suggests that the Western economy is saturated with freely circulated signs. For this reason, it is impossible to secure consistency and coherence of meaning, and 'the specificity of western fashion has been the reflection of these instabilities by the scope of consumerism' (Craik, 1994, p. 204). This permits many fashion brands and advertisers to imprint unconventional and controversial signs into their campaigns, not only for shock effect, but also to target their marginalised customers.

'Human agency,' in the words of Davis' (1992), is essential to the discussion and understanding of the system of fashion; its influence arrives 'in the form of fashion designers, a vast apparel industry, and a critically responsive consuming public' (p. 26). Communication of meaning does not work through a one-way-only channel – consumers are both the receivers and creators of meaning as well. Consumption is 'a social and cultural activity fundamental to identity formation' (Sender, 2005, p. 11). The consumption of fashion therefore constitutes a major share of the formulation of one's sense of self. Instead of being perceived merely as a reflection of social constructs, fashion contributes to meaning construction for identities and social groupings. For many gay men, 'seeing' and 'wearing' have become important techniques in constructing their understandings of who they are and to which community they belong. Therefore, in the next part of this chapter, this thesis will discuss how gay men forge their individual and collective identities through the negotiation of meaning of dichotomous gender codes embedded in fashion adverts.

2.4.

Sexuality in fashion and fashion advertising

Some people say I dress too gay.

But ev'ry day, I feel so gay.

And when I'm gay, I dress that way.

Is something wrong with that?

Carmen Miranda, ***The Lady in the Tutti Frutti Hat***

As might be expected, both gender and sexuality constitute critical parts of one's perspective towards erotic images. Hence, examining the operation of gender and sexuality in fashion images constitutes a pivotal part of this thesis' investigation of homoeroticism in fashion advertising. In previous sections, this thesis has already discussed the role of gender in fashion and fashion advertising. This thesis has also noted that fashion practices have been substantially influenced by the collective tensions of contradictory identities in Western society (Craik, 1994; Davis, 1992; Wilson, 2003). These tensions range from youth versus age, work versus leisure, modesty versus liberation, religion versus secularism, and also femininity versus masculinity. Fashion is a means by which an individual formulates their sense of self. It is a continuing and neverending process since the meaning of fashion is always subject to change. The act of fashion is not limited to the acts of dressing or wearing – seeing fashion images or advertisements forms another significant part of consuming fashion. Inasmuch as browsing fashion advertisements is a part of the consumption of fashion, it in fact shapes one's formation of identity greatly. Accordingly, to many gay men the consumption of fashion images becomes a means of navigating masculinity and sexuality, and of constructing the meaning behind what it is to be a part of gay community (Edwards, 1997; Kates, 2004; Sender, 2005).

One key aspect of how an individual understands the concept of masculinity is based on masculinity's opposition to femininity. In the same manner, homosexuality might only function on the social tensions between homosexuality and heterosexuality. Contrary to popular opinion, homosexuality, as is understand today, is not a 'condition,' which is permanent, fixed or in a rigid state (Oksala, 2014). The term 'homosexuality' has only existed since the late nineteenth century, while homosexual sex had been documented and observed throughout the history. The scientific definition of homosexuality was, according to Foucault, invented by medical professionals by 'installing a series of binaries distinguishing self from other, identity from non-identity' (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p, 28). Opposed to Gramsci's idea that science provides unbiased and objective answers to difficult philosophical questions, Foucault has argued that the power dictating cultural norms was what had shifted from dominant classes to the scientists. Instead of church, it was now doctors, biologists and psychiatrists who possessed the cultural control to define and categorise individuals as 'normal' or not. This was demonstrated by the original inclusion of homosexuality in the American Psychiatric Association's publication *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual,* and its removal from the list in 1973. The discursive construction of sexuality by science and medical professionals, which Foucault (1978/1990) calls *scientia sexaulis*, is what has constituted how homosexuality is understood by Western society. It becomes the abnormal and deviant Other, opposite to the desired and normative heterosexuality.

Even though no longer classified as a mental illness by medical professionals, notions of Otherness and abnormality linked to homosexuality have not been overthrown completely. In fact, homosexuality is a social construct based on its difference to heterosexuality and the essence of gay identity lies in this Otherness. Therefore, the social tensions between heterosexuality and other sexualities need to remain unsolved for this purpose (Holliday, 2001). Only through these differences and boundaries, can one identify himself as a homosexual man. This is where the social tensions of gender and sexuality collide and together form a venue in which gay men navigate themselves and construct identities in the fashion sphere. Gendered

fashion has become a pivotal medium for the wearer to express their understanding of femininity and masculinity ever since the rise of the bourgeois class. It is unsurprising that marginalised groups, particularly 'sexual deviants' like gay, lesbian and transgender people, who do not conform to the strict cultural conventions of gender codes, choose to construct, negotiate and express their identities through modern fashion practice.

Modern fashion *plays* endlessly with the distinction between masculinity and femininity. With it we express our shifting ideas about what masculinity and femininity are. Fashion permits us to flirts with transvestism, precisely to divest it of all its danger and power. (Wilson, 2003, p. 122, emphasis in original)

As a performative practice, fashion is, to many who have questioned their sexuality or identified as part of the gay community, on the one hand a means of demonstrating and accepting differences (Dyer, 2002). On the other hand, to those who do not want to defy the conventions of gender, it is 'a way of passing and becoming invisible under the guise of heterosexuality' (Geczy & Karaminas, 2013, p. 7). This duality demonstrates how individuals negotiate sexuality and identity through fashion practice and communicative image. Because meaning in the process of communication is not fixed, readers may interpret the same image differently even within the same cultural setting and time period. Representations of masculinity and femininity in fashion practices and campaigns are à la carte for gay consumers. Different characteristics are all available for them to choose and construct their own ideal menu of what it is to be a gay man.

Amongst gay men who dress in the manner so as to demonstrate their differences from heterosexual men, the adoption of a more feminine wardrobe resembling women's fashion existed as a prominent style before the 1960s (Cole, 2000). Because many in the gay community decided to pass as straight in order to conceal their identities, the spotlight focused instead on gay men who were not afraid of displaying their feminine attributes. Effeminacy since became a synonym for gay men, albeit most of the time used in a demeaning and stigmatising manner.

[Q]ueer style is the unstable, bizarre other to heterosexual normativity. Whereas the latter is aligned to legible codes such as the suit for the male and the dress for the female, queer style is resistant to them. It does, however, have a set of consistent attributes such as non functionality and exaggeration. (Geczy & Karaminas, 2013, p. 4)

The idea of dressing oneself in a more campy and feminine fashion was to many confusing and discomfiting (Dyer, 2002). Gay men were, in the eyes of many, a group of flamboyant and frivolous caricatures. Even in the entertainment industry, where acceptance of homosexuality was higher, the portrayal of gay men in television series or movies was still trapped in a derogatory stereotype of gay men (Henning, 2004), which in fact often accentuated the effeminate cliché. Fashion's association with gay men and the stigmatisation of homosexuality served to reinforce this derogative connotation, such that fashion accordingly became a taboo for heterosexual men. Any indication of caring about fashion could have led to notions of un-manliness and or even more perilously, homosexuality.

Homosexuality, according to D'Emilio (2007), existed only based on the precondition that the Western capitalist system had relinquished people from family labour and created 'the separation of sexuality from procreation' (p. 241). Without the responsibilities relating to the family economy, individuals now had the opportunity to follow their homosexual desires. Although people could now follow their own sexual desires without being constricted by the conventional nuclear family structure, this did not mean that being sexually attracted to one's own sex equalled identifying oneself as a gay or lesbian. What constitutes gay community and gay culture is, in essence, the gay identity that is artificially and collectively constructed and established by homosexual men conscious of their Otherness. Instead of sexual preference, what sets the gay community apart from their heterosexual counterparts is the idea of *gay sensibility*, that is, the act of discerning the Otherness within their surroundings.

With respect to the collective identity of gay men, Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *capital* are of great use. People navigate themselves through structural relationships as well as negotiate and generate meaning within varied socially structured *fields*. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is a system of 'durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures' (1990, p. 53). It is structured by the culture to which a person belongs and is structured continually by human agency; it is fixed, yet changeable. Habitus focuses on how people bring their personal histories into the present environment in which they are situated.

We are faced at any moment with a variety of possible forks in that path, or choices of actions and beliefs. This range of choices depends on our current context (the position we occupy in a particular social field), but at the same time which of these choices are visible to us and which we do not see as possible is the result of our past journey. … Which ones we choose to take thereby depends on the range of options available at that moment…, the range of those options that are visible to us as viable, and our dispositions or tendencies to choose some options rather than others (habitus). Our choices will then in turn shape our future possibilities. … The structures of the habitus are thus neither fixed nor in constant flux. (Maton, 2012, p. 51-52)

Habitus thus captures how an individual's perceptions, thoughts, appreciations and actions are moulded by one's upbringing and life experiences (Maton, 2012). In addition, it describes 'how taste shapes the relationship between the body and its symbolic and material contexts,' extending to the 'intimate connection between ways of living and one's

sense of class, gender, race, and other forms of cultural belongings' (Sender, 2005, p. 14). Accordingly, a person's fashion practice is an outcome of the interaction between one's habitus and different capitals.

The term capital is used by Bourdieu in a broader sense to refer to 'assets of different kinds' which are 'transformed and exchanged within complex network or circuits within and across different fields' (Moore, 2012, p. 99). Therefore, Bourdieu's idea of capital can be employed not only in the economic sphere, but also in other *symbolic* domains, for example cultural, linguistic and scientific capital. Furthermore, symbolic capital should be understood as 'qualitative differences in *forms* of consciousness *within* different social groups' and habitus as 'a specialization of consciousness and a recognized mastery of some technique(s)' (Moore, 2012, p. 99). The formation of *cultural capital* comes through the formal education system wherein individuals obtain knowledge from materials provided by authorities, for example, schools, libraries and museums. However, these spaces are unable to generate the sensibility of gay men. Rather, their collective consciousness is produced in opposition to what the mainstream culture creates in a milieu outside of formal educational spaces. This is understood as a form of *subcultural capital*. A gay habitus is thereby formed through the acquisition of gay subcultural capital. For instance, many gay men learn and obtain their knowledge of specific fashion codes only once they start participating in and associating themselves with gay community. They would not have any idea that a handkerchief put into the back pocket of a man's trousers could carry the meaning of his sexual preference depending on whether the handkerchief is placed in the right or left pocket. By being exposed to a gay habitat existing in the consumer sphere and on the street, one's gay sensibility is cultivated, and tastes are articulated. From this standpoint, gay identity consists of various aspects of gay subcultural capital such as behaviour, gestures, knowledge and codes that members of the community need to learn and master for the purpose of communicating with one another.

The formation of *habitus*, and the symbolic capital it endows, occurs through the "pedagogic work" of the inculcation of the "strict rules" to the point that they acquire an embodied form. (Moore, 2012, p. 109)

Failing to follow the rules may result in rejection, alienation and loss of one's membership within the community. On the other hand, gay men who obtain the knowledge become equipped with *gaydar*, which is the ability to tell whether someone is gay or not by observing his fashion attire, posture, ways of speaking and behaviour. Gaydar, while not always accurate, allows gay men to read visual notions of men differently than their heterosexual counterparts.

If sexuality, or any other identity, could be registered and negotiated in fashion practice, it could then be marked and negotiated in visual media as well. Advertising has helped in 'promulgating dualistic gender roles and prescribing sexual identities' by employing signifiers of 'stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity' (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 21-22). In fashion campaigns, heterosexuality operates on the legitimacy of gender conventions; therefore, any violation of this binary system might evoke suspicion of homosexuality. Nevertheless, fashion has been known for its transgression of gender rules. It would be impossible to have different readings of the launch campaign of Calvin Klein Underwear if it were none other than a mere underwear advertisement, nor would there be an outcry concerning a masculinity crisis from conservatives if gender and sexual codes were fixed and rigid in fashion. Ambiguity and ambivalence of fashion resulting from unstable gender and sexuality are of great importance for this thesis' investigation of homoerotic representatives in fashion advertisements. To be able to interpret homoerotic codes in fashion advertising is to be familiar with the gay habitus and equipped with 'know-how'. From the perspective of gay men, homoerotic advertisements speak to them through the subtle encoding of signs that only they can decipher and understand (Clark, 1991). Through this *insider reading*, gay readers might interpret an image as homoerotic, even if that was not the creator's intention (Rinallo, 2007; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). The meaning of homoerotic fashion image is thereby understood and interpreted by gay male readers rather than the creator of image.

Seeing photographed, representational figures in fashion adverts is a process of recognising and identifying. Like wearing, it contributes to individuals' identity formation. Individuals shift between identification and misidentification with the promoted masculinity. Moreover, male readers also formulate and reshape their subjectivity, notably their conceptions of masculinity, when they gaze upon other men in fashion images. Their reaction to masculinities in fashion adverts is based on the meaning they extract from the images. This meaning is drafted, negotiated and then produced from the interplay between their own sense of self and a chain of social tensions. In other words, seeing fashion images and adverts is a technique for forming oneself. Rather than merely mirroring changes in social fabrics, contemporary fashion advertising participates in the culture shift by providing various masculine representations for male readers, straight or gay, to inhabit. Gay men, through the practice of seeing, recognising and identifying themselves in fashion advertisements, translate specific visual elements into gay signifiers for which they themselves discern and identify with. Hence, it is gay readers who make many fashion images homoerotic with their personal perspectives.

2.5.

Summary

This chapter reviewed key aspects of fashion communication. First, it endeavoured to elucidate how the meaning tying together all participants in fashion system is created, addressed, and communicated between individuals and within communities. By drawing upon semiotics and the concept of boundaries, the generation of meaning through signifying practice was addressed in this chapter. Communication in human societies works on a system of representations and difference, thus anything that can function as a sign may be incorporated into a society's conceptual system and thereby generate and transmit meanings. From this standpoint, a fashion image may carry a strand of meanings in a similar manner to a word

This chapter then moved on to discuss the conception of gender through the perspective of structuralism. Inspired by semiotics, structuralism suggests that an individual's subjectivity is culturally and socially constructed. There are underlying structures in every society which not only form systems of power and class, but also help to shape how people make sense of the world and themselves. Gender is then a culturally moulded identity situated within Western society and its deeper structure. Advertising has always been a significant medium for constructing the stereotypes of gender in the consumer sphere. It is a powerful and influential means for retailers and marketers to categorise their customer groups and persuade consumers to conform to gender norms. Consequently, gender division in the Western fashion system is criticised for its reinforcement of the power relations between men and women, which operate to the benefit of middle-class, white men in a capitalist patriarchal society.

Yet, poststructuralism has refuted a unified and authoritative account of meaning. While the system of representation enables creators to inscribe message in their work, and readers to interpret what the message means, this process of communication is not linear, and meaning is not fixed in communication. It is crucial to discern social variables in interpreting the meanings of a sign for different audiences and social groupings. Therefore, from poststructuralism's perspective, a plurality of interpretations of a fashion image is inevitable. Instead of stabilising the polarity of gender, the visual arena has turned into an intersection for negotiating. Through consumption of fashion advertisements, viewers select preferred gender representatives and map them onto their bodies. Consumers, even while existing as part of the social structure, still retain the agency to negotiate and construct their own gender identities by actively identifying with and rejecting the representational gender codes in advertising.

Following the poststructuralist argument, fashion advertising has thus become a field facilitating ambivalence and a variety of meanings. Different formations of masculinity in fashion advertising become possible because of this indeterminacy. An important part of the identity of gay men is therefore the outcome of their negotiation process in relation to masculine representations in fashion adverts. The collective identity and awareness of their Otherness is integrated into the idea of gay sensibility, a subcultural knowledge learned from daily interactions with other homosexuals and their experiences of being marginalised by heteronormative society. By recognising and identifying specific signifiers in fashion advertisements, gay readers formulate their own subjectivity and furthermore, flirt with the notion of homosexual desires believed by them to be included therein. Due to the fact that this capability to discern the 'unconventional' hidden message directed at themselves is obtained through *installing their gaydar*, gay men's detection of homoeroticism stems from the distinction between the portrayal of male models in homoerotic campaigns and conventional advertisements. It is thus essential to this thesis to address the historical and cultural context regarding how conventional masculinity has been captured in fashion images. This will be elaborated on in the following chapter. In addition, this thesis aims to further discuss how masculinity has evolved and diversified by reason of the sexualisation and commodification of the male body in mass media, and thereby opening various new subject positions for male readers to inhabit.

THE MALE BODY AND MASCULINITY IN FASHION ADVERTISING

The previous chapter addressed poststructuralist discourse on gender and sexuality in both fashion and fashion advertising, laying a theoretical foundation for the investigation presented in this thesis. Before proceeding to examine and analyse homoeroticism in fashion advertisements, it is necessary to examine how representations of masculinity have evolved in fashion advertising, as well as to inspect how fashion advertising acts as a medium for covertly or overtly transferring visual homoerotica in the consumer sphere. This thesis divides these two key aspects of discussion into two chapters. This chapter endeavours to elucidate the changing definition of masculinity in fashion advertising. The next chapter further examines masculinities in fashion advertising through the perspective of homoeroticism.

The titillating development of fashion photography from the 1960s onwards was caused by a change in the sex-political environment of Western society (Barron-Duncan, 2017). The sexualisation of Western popular culture could not flower without technological advances and business imperatives (McNair, 2002). Popular culture has flourished since the early twentieth century due to advancements in printing technology, contributing to increased readership and circulation of print media, as well as the development of the film and television industries, which led to the rise of the entertainment industry. Meanwhile, Western society witnessed a representative change in the body and fashion of women. The female body has gone through a series of breakthroughs since the late nineteenth century, with some part of the restrictions and censorship ascribed by the political and moral authority stripped away each time. Yet, it was the sexual revolution of the 1960s in which the female body underwent the most drastic change, emancipating and liberating it from social, cultural and political conventions. Meanwhile, Hollywood produced new male icons, like Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) and James Dean in *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), who gradually relinquished conventional notions of masculinity and embraced some feminine qualities in their acting (Bordo, 1999). These men frequently appeared in newspapers, on television screens, in daily conversations and certainly on fashion spreads, foreshadowing an emerging wave of new masculinities in the near future.

The development of sex culture in Western society also insidiously brought the neutral and civil status of the male body into question. A collaboration of capitalist consumerism and contemporary visual culture problematised, sexualised and commodified the male body (Bordo, 1999; Falk, 1994; Featherstone, 1982; Geczy & Karaminas, 2017; Turner, 1996). Fashion has been exceptionally connected to the entertainment industry following the rise of popular culture, including in cinema, music and television, (Craik, 1994; Kismaric & Respini, 2008). Therefore, the marketing, advertising and publishing sectors in the fashion industry functioned as a visual arena to facilitate the newly sexualised male bodies of popular culture. The fashion industry started introducing several unorthodox masculinities to male consumers. The emergence of new masculinities in fashion advertising complicated and feminised representations of masculinity in mass media, a development touted by some as a threat to masculinity (Ervin, 2011; Shugart, 2008). Furthermore, the transformation of male bodies and masculinities in mass media also affected and shifted conventional perceptions of masculinity. At the same time, advances in broadcasting technology increased the popularity of competitive sports and contributed to stardom of professional sportsmen. This further led many professional athletes to begin following the fashion practices of male actors and singers. With stylish athletes becoming the heroes of young men, masculine attributes demonstrated by the athletes become standards of masculinity for male fans to look up to. Fashioning oneself, to a certain extent, is no longer perceived as a risky act for men.

The purpose of this chapter is to review literature on discourse concerning the male body and masculinity. It begins by a discussion of fashion photography, the essential medium for the depiction of the bodies of models, as well as fashion photography's gradual adoption of pornographic aesthetics after the 1960s. In addition, this thesis briefly addresses a structuralist division between erotica in the arts and pornography in mass media. The second section moves on to inspect historicity of the body in Western culture, followed by a postmodernist rejection of the body-mind dualism in traditional Western thought. The section further focuses on the male body, in particular its usefulness in the construction of the *performing self* in contemporary consumer and visual culture. The third section presents the new male role model – *New Man* – introduced by the fashion industry at the time of sexual liberation, which was causing drastic changes in the social fabric of Western countries. While it is still debatable whether the New Man successfully influenced perceptions of masculinity amongst the public, particularly those of ordinary straight men, fashion advertisers did observe huge potential in certain segments of the men's fashion and grooming industry, heralded by the success of brands like Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren and Giorgio Armani. Coinciding with the LGBTQ social movements in the 1980s and 90s, a new masculinity called arrived the *metrosexual*, the image of which was 'the urbane, successful, sophisticated, and well-groomed modern heterosexual man' (Shugart, 2008, p. 283). This new masculinity is the focus of the two remaining sections of this chapter, acting as the fulcrum of this thesis' discussion of two academic approaches to the concept of masculinity. Distinctions between representations of masculinity in sports-themed fashion campaigns and sportswear adverts are also addressed, due to the many metrosexual idols that act as both professional sportsmen and fashion gurus to their male fans. The complex and paradoxical display of masculinity shown by metrosexual sports stars leads this thesis to its inspection of masculinity – how masculinity can be understood and how it operates in society. In the last section, this thesis compares Foucauldian approaches with Gramscian approaches on the concept of masculinity, revealing the advantages and practicality of Foucault's historically situated subjectivity in understanding masculinities in contemporary consumer and visual culture, as well as the possibility of shifting subject-positions.

3.1.
The pornified lens: Fashion photography

Are we living in a land where sex and horror are the new Gods?

Yeah

Frankie Goes to Hollywood, *Two Tribes* (1984)

Fashion photography is always struggling to substantiate its legitimacy in the realm of art and photography. Its inseparable relationship with the commercial market and fast-changing trends, some would argue, are 'negating the purity of the photographic image' (Brookes, 1992, p. 17). This self-formation is crucial to the production of fashion imagery. Fashion photography incorporates aesthetics with photographic realism to facilitate the creation of a persuasive and compelling world of fantasy.

Fashion photography's dealings with the beautiful and the ephemeral don't do it any favours either. Aestheticizing social issues is an effective way of reinforcing audience passivity and dulling the seriousness of events … Despite the fact that fashion imagery has cheerfully engaged with aesthetically challenging and politically unsettling subject matter for decades, fashion images are often said to pander to traditional ideals of beauty, denying agency to those they represent and those who consume them. (Shinkle, 2008, p. 12)

To produce a fantasy for audiences and potential consumers requires the brainstorming and cooperation of a legion of creators, including photographers, models, stylists, and editors. In other words, fashion photography is a collective process serving the interests of fashion businesses and markets (Aspers, 2006). This is other side of fashion photography – it is staged, artificial and unauthentic (Arnold, 1999; Craik, 1994; Shinkle, 2008). The world of fashion imagery is created for selling goods and increasing profits. This commercial side of fashion photography undermines its status in the domain of photography, where an image captures a critical moment that is not meant for reproduction.

Fashion photography is acclaimed as a means to document 'changing ideas about fashion and gender, and about body – habitus relations' (Craik, 1994, p. 92-93). This characteristic dates back to the origin of fashion photography in the early twentieth century, when it was used as a documentary medium to capture the details of clothing (Craik, 1994). The authentic presentation of garments was opposite to the then mainstream method of fashion publications – fashion illustration. The naturalism, realism and truthfulness presented in fashion photographs were in stark contrast to the artistic and decorative characteristics of fashion illustrations, which offered the glamour and exoticism that fashion designers and editors desired. It was not until the late 1930s that technological developments lowered the cost of colour cameras, hence

incentivising fashion magazines to replace most of its illustrations with photographs (Craik, 1994). Fashion photography then succeeded as the main medium employed by fashion publications. In short, the paradoxical characteristics of fashion photography, as a technique of self-formation and a medium of representation, impeded its efforts to become part of conventional photography. That said, this duality of fashion photography is precisely the reason why it was able to instigate a series of challenges to social norms and gender politics in Western society starting from the 1960s (Triggs, 1992). It is both the ambiguous characteristics of fashion photography and the intentional defiance of photographers against social conventions of gender and sexuality in fashion advertising that contribute to the inscription of erotic signifiers in fashion images.

By the 1960s, some fashion photographers had begun to feel dissatisfied with conventional fashion photography. They started a revolution, beginning to experiment with new techniques with which to capture their subjects. In the fashion industry, the 1960s are marked as the birth of celebrity fashion photographers. These photographers had extremely powerful roles in arranging the shooting, casting the models and deciding the aesthetics of the photoshoot. Instead of reproducing images of products in the way that emphasised naturalism and realism, these fashion photographers began experimenting with narratives influenced by films (Craik, 1994; Maynard, 2009). Their photographic works and editorial images often provoked, confronted, irritated and even infuriated customers and the public. One of the frontiers in this clash was that of sexuality, first of women, and then of men. The 'blatant sexual overtones and overtly sexual bodies' in their work challenged readers of fashion magazines to interrogate themselves on the subject of 'fantasies, myths and stereotypes about sexuality' (Craik, 1994, p. 109). Nevertheless, it was not until the 1970s that photographers like Helmut Newton and Guy Bourdin escalated and proliferated the explicitness of female sexuality in fashion campaigns (Brookes, 1992). This development came against the backdrop of the sexual revolution, the emergence of sex discourse in the public sphere and a rapid expansion of the sex industry in the United States and other major Western countries, such as the United Kingdom, Germany, and Scandinavian countries.

It is not surprising that both Newton and Bourdin were heavily criticised by some feminists and conservatives for being exploitative and misogynist due to the clear resemblance between the female bodies in their photographs and those in pornography (Barron-Duncan, 2017; Craik, 1994). Both bodies were objectified, displayed as commodities to be traded. The definition of what material could be considered 'pornographic' nonetheless was unclear. Furthermore, any such definition was problematic for the reason that both pornography and its high culture counterpart – erotica, were loaded with political, social, moral and aesthetic connotations (McNair, 1996). Even though the presence of pornography in the public domain only appeared after the invention of new communication technologies like printing, photography and film, the criteria for labelling an image pornographic kept changing over a short period of time in Western culture.

Irrespective of different standpoints, most social commentators agree that the content of pornography is sex. Whether an image or a film is pornographic is decided by how explicitly the sex is being displayed, and whether such a display is regarded as obscene by law enforcement and art critics. One might note that, with continuing changes in moral standards, cultural norms and attitudes concerning sexuality, the definition of what constitutes pornographic material remains perpetually unstable. Pornography can also 'refer to representations in which sexual penetration is connoted as well as denoted; in which sexual activity is merely implied, rather than shown' (McNair, 1996, p. 46). 'Pornographic text' thus constitutes as 'a complex sign operating at many levels of meaning: denotative, connotative, and ideological' (McNair, 1996, p. 90). Many commentators then use the words 'hardcore/hard' and 'softcore/soft' to distinguish different degrees of sexually explicit materials (Henning, 2004). In contrast to pornography, the word 'erotica' is used by some social and art commentators to describe titillating artwork. This word choice represents a distinction between the high, elitist art culture and low, mass popular culture (McNair, 1996). This distinction is, however, not sustainable in a poststructuralist world, and 'pornographic' and 'erotic' are interchangeable in this thesis in terms of describing images that connate sexual activity. Because of the imprecise definition of pornography, sexual overtones present in fashion photography become an in-between case. Erotic fashion images are only permitted to be published in the public domain by virtue of their ambiguous status, hovering between the explicitly sexual connotations of hardcore pornography and the romance and fantasy of fashion. Eroticism in the fashion imagery intricately employs some characteristics of hardcore pornography, such as spectacle and submission. At the same time, it also retains the innocence of romance, as viewers transfer and project the sublimation of their desires onto products.

Meanwhile, the clothes in the photographs became less and less the focus of photographers and eventually readers, gradually devolving into 'incidental props' (Kismaric & Respini, 2008). The 'emancipation of the image from its caption, and of the product-image from the product' transformed fashion images and advertising into 'the pure veneer, the absolute façade for and of itself' (Brookes, 1992, p. 22). In order to catch the attention of audiences, the 'promotional function of fashion photography had been redefined and undermined' by fashion photographers (Craik, 1994, p. 110). A new protagonist succeeded at the centre of photographs and editorials – ambivalence. This ambivalence sought to exploit the reader's equivocal relations to tangible commercial goods and intangible subjectivity (Maynard, 2009). Within different contexts, contradictory social and gender codes were inscribed, twisted, manipulated and set side by side through the transience of images. Readers now had the privilege of cruising from one viewing position to another simply by flipping a page.

The body of the model became an entity to locate the ambivalence of fashion photography and advertising. The body was objectified, commodified and loaded with desires just like any fashion item in the consumer sphere. Similar to an evening gown, a pair of stilettos, diamond necklace or bottle of perfume, the body became a venue for advertisers to register a variety of meanings and upon which readers transmitted their fantasies. Browsing the body in a fashion image is thus an embodied practice, in that one maps the pictured body onto his or her own corporeal body. The ambiguity and ambivalence casted in the fashion advertisement feeds into a viewer's construction of subjectivity. Accordingly, the body becomes a complex entity intertwined with the tensions of ideologies, identities and values. Only with the advancement of medical technologies and emergence of postmodernism did the body garner the attention of some sociologists, growing into an influential research field in the social sciences. To further investigate the sexualisation of men's bodies in fashion advertising, it is necessary for this thesis to review the evolution of the concept of the body. In the following section, this thesis elaborates on discourse on the body that both disturbs its natural state, and restores its corporeality.

3.2.

The male body: From virtuous beauty to beauty on display

Let's get physical, physical
I want to get physical
Let's get into physical
Let me hear your body talk, your body talk
Let me hear your body talk

Olivia Newton-John, *Physical* (1981)

The emergence of discourse on the body in humanities and social sciences was a consequence of major social changes, including advances in medical fields in relation to anatomy, disease and the understanding of how the body works; the ageing population in western countries; the growing socio-economic status of women and academic impact of feminism; the deconstruction of the nuclear family; and the rise of individualism (Turner, 1996), with a huge volume of literature contributing to discourse on the human body ever since. Unlike its perception in pre-industrial Western civilisation, the human body in contemporary culture acts as an ambiguous and paradoxical concept that 'goes far beyond its concrete physical boundaries' (Falk, 1994, p. 1). Postmodernist development of the discourse on the body has emancipated the human body from the conventional Western idea of the body-mind dualism, opening up space for researchers to examine the involvement of the body in other discourses, including that in fashion and fashion advertising. It is indeed the human body that functions as the foci of the self-evaluation and self-improvement promoted by advertisers within contemporary consumer culture (Falk, 1994; Featherstone, 1982; Geczy & Karaminas, 2017; Turner, 1996).

Consumer culture latches onto the prevalent self-preservationist conception of the body, which encourages the individual to adopt instrumental strategies to combat deterioration and decay … and combines it with the notion that the body is a vehicle of pleasure and self-expression. Images of the body beautiful, openly sexual and associated with hedonism, leisure and display, emphasise the importance of appearance and the 'look'. Within consumer culture, advertisements, the popular press, television and motion pictures, provide a proliferation of stylised images of the body. (Featherstone, 1982, p. 18)

The human body has gradually detached from traditional values, moving into a consumer sphere dominated by visual images and commodities and becoming the body on display. 'The modern consuming self is,' in the words of Turner (1996), 'a representational being' (p. 7). In other words, the body in today's world is a means of self-expression.

Before this thesis proceeds with a discussion on the body in contemporary society and fashion advertising, it is necessary to briefly address the *historicity* of the body – the development of the body in regard to historical changes in cultural and social orders. The human body has a long history of being regulated and disciplined by different ideologies, religions and ruling classes. The ascetic tradition of Christianity was an

attempt to achieve 'chastity and the purity of the soul through freedom from the evils of the flesh and other wordly *[sic]* vices' (Falk, 1994, p. 47). This included an uneasiness towards bodily pleasure and desire, in which the human body was characterised as a vessel full of sin, like *gluttony, lust* and other deadly sins. The body functioned as a reminder of mankind's alienation from God, a symbol of infinity and perfection. Therefore, disciplinary practices were necessary to govern the body. Fasting, self-flagellation and celibacy were all self-restraint techniques by which individuals could emancipate the soul constrained within a defective and evil body, thereby reaching a higher spiritual realm (Bordo, 1999; Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Falk, 1994; Solomon-Godeau, 1997; Turner, 1996).

This body-mind/soul duality dates back to ancient Greek civilisation. In Plato's *Symposium*, the love between two *men* was praised for the reason that it was a love of the soul rather than of the body. An older man loved a younger man not because he was a boy, but because he was an *intelligent* being. Greek moral virtue was furthermore 'closely associated with the lives and values of free rational men who regulated the public sphere to the political expulsion of women, young men and slaves' (Turner, 1996, p. 11).

> **The Love who is the offspring of the common Aphrodite is essentially common, and has no discrimination, being such as the meaner sort of men feel, and is apt to be of women as well as of youths, and is of the body rather than of the soul – the most foolish beings are the objects of this love which desires only to gain an end, but never thinks of accomplishing the end nobly, and therefore does good and evil quite indiscriminately. (Plato, trans. 1892)**

A rational man's intellectual and emotional self-mastery led to the true beauty, and was thus simultaneously superior to and threatened by bodily passions and pleasures. Likewise, the body of ancient Olympic athletes was not a body of desire or pleasure, representing instead individual's pursuit of *kalokagathia* – the ancient Greek concept of being a morally good and beautiful person, explained mainly in the writings of Aristotle (Reid, 2014).

Perceptions of the human body shifted as Western culture entered the Age of Enlightenment. In the philosophy of Descartes, 'the rational capacity of human beings' was emphasised for its capability to understand the world without the ritualistic and religious systems (Turner, 1996, p. 9). Cartesian notions of the body were characterised by the separation of the body and mind, as well as the subordination of the body to the mind, as he contended that 'this I [that is to say, my soul by which I am what I am], is entirely and absolutely distinct from my body, and can exist without it' (Descartes, 2000, p.28). In other words, the body was merely a machine following instructions given by the mind. It is further suggested that the rise of ascetic capitalism and the bourgeoisie was influenced by Christian theology and religious traditions concerned with instrumenting one's body (Falk, 1994; Turner, 1996). The dominance of Rationalism in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western society once again undermined and neglected the status of the body, regarding the body as 'a medium for action based on rational will and especially action furthering personal interests' (Falk, 1994, p. 50). The vital distinction between Christian mind-body duality and the Cartesian perception of the body, is that in Cartesian thought the *soul* is replaced by *reason*. Instead of disciplining the body to achieve a higher spiritual level, the body was now disciplined in pursuit of *rationality*. At the same time, the emergence of explicit guidelines regulating the body at the individual, interpersonal and social levels, all in the name of civility, were underpinned by the employment of dualism in every aspect of society, namely in gender, fashion, politics and social spaces (Bordo, 1999; Craik, 1994; Solomon-Godeau, 1997; Turner, 1996).

> **The body becomes part of an increasingly network of order, classifications and measurements out of which grows a prison commensurable with the soul of the individualized subject. the body ultimately becomes the *medium of self*: the very use of the terms 'I' and 'my body' already makes this fundamental distinction. (Falk, 1994, p. 51, emphasis in original)**

The male body was more than a mere biological organism. It was, in fact, a living host for values like civility, moral virtue and rationality.

Cartesian-influenced perceptions of the body thrived into the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, though they were gradually criticised and dismissed by writers like Kierkegaard, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, who rejected both the system of universal idealism of Kant and Hegel, and the metaphysical concentration on abstractions in Western philosophy (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Entwistle, 2000; Oksala, 2014; Turner, 1996). In repudiations of Cartesian understandings of the body, the writing of postmodern philosophers reintroduced the body to the philosophical domain. Since the nineteenth century, paralleling the development of technology and science, drastic change have occurred in the interpretation and perception of meanings and of the aesthetics of the body, along with the complicated relationships of the individual with his or her own body (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Entwistle, 2000; Falk, 1994; Turner, 1996). Due to advances in technology, medical science and human anatomy, it is now known that the human cognitive process is hugely affected by unintentional or uncontrolled interferences. In other words, the traditional perspective of the human acting as a perfect compute, processing information based on input and output and making rational, logical decisions, was contested by the cognitive revolution of the 1960s. By rejecting body-mind dualism, the cognitive revolution contended that the body intricately participates in human cognitive processes. The body is no longer subordinate to rationality or religious regulation. Postmodernist theorists 'bring the body back into play precisely to emphasize the fundamentally contradictory character of all physical and intellectual activity' (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998, p. 16). In a post-industrial society, the body functions as a problematic site of contentions, an intersection of paradoxical and contradictory representations, identities, ideologies and politics. It is a 'battlefield on which inner and outer dimensions of experience engage in an unresolved, ongoing struggle' (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998, p. 15). The body is not a mere reflection of these conflicts – it is actively involved in the negotiation process. Through notions of embodiment, the body is extricated from a myth of self-containment, natural-possession and de-sensualisation.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1978), the body was used by Foucault to examine how power functions in a modern society. He suggested that universal and transhistorical beliefs in traditional Western philosophy are in fact 'contingent, historical and culturally variable' (Oksala, 2014). A new mechanism of power, labelled by Foucault as disciplinary power, emerged in the eighteenth century through the discipline, reconstructing

and remoulding of the bodies of individuals as part of their consensual engagements with self-recreation and self-monitoring. Foucault's concept of disciplinary power was essential to his development of modern subjectivity, which this thesis discusses in section *3.5.*. While the body is managed and manipulated by the society, Foucault does not regard the body as a mere social construct. Rather, Foucault contenthat ontological bodily experiences such as pleasures and sensations must also be considered. In other words, the body is both *sensible* and *sensual.*

> **Bodies always assume meaning through a complex process in which competing discourses, conceptualizations and practices intertwine with private sensations, pleasures and pains. (Oksala, 2014, p. 95)**

Phenomenology takes the concept of bodily experiences further, suggesting that the world is perceived through the embodied consciousnesses of individuals (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Entwistle, 2000; Turner, 1996). The body, from the phenomenological perspective, is more than a physical object, it *is* simultaneously one's self and an *expression* of one's self. In postmodern consumer culture, the body is both culturally constituted by *and* situated within society.

The focus on the body that emerged in sociology in the 1980s created problems for the understanding of the body. This focus was later adopted by some fashion writers as a new approach to investigate fashion. According to these writers, the instability ascribed to the body, especially in a postmodernist and post-industrial society, was in fact the prominent instigator of the uncertain, impermanent and, generally speaking, equivocal and contradictory meanings in fashion (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Craik, 1994; Entwistle, 2000). Fashion, in their words, was not only a mass of signifiers woven into garments or other adornments, but a set of bodily practices. Dressing oneself was an act combining the body and the mind, not only a static expression but also a movement. The human body was an active actor, as opposed to passively existing within the construction of fashion and its meanings.

> **The problem of the body lies at the juncture of the major issues of sociological theory. The epistemological problems of sociology, from the neo-Kantian movement onwards, centre on the dual membership of the human species in nature and culture. The human body is subject to processes of birth, decay and death which result from its placement in the natural world, but these processes are also 'meaningful' events located in a world of a cultural beliefs, symbols and practices. (Turner, 1996, p.81-82)**

Some fashion scholars, inspired by postmodernist philosophers and social theorists, have consequently followed suit and started focusing on the status and importance of the body in the fashion system and daily fashioning acts (for example see: Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998; Entwistle, 2000). Because the body is constantly redefined by shifts in social landscapes and changes the body and its ambivalent and unstable extensions – adornments like tattoos, clothes and accessories – must be examined and investigated within a broader social context. The conflicting and unstable tensions registered in fashion are the result of a contentious body. When a dress is adorned as an extension of one's body, it is inevitable that it sustains and endures the incoherent and disjointed meanings of the body (Cavallaro & Warwick, 1998). This illustrates that fashion is always changing by virtue of the instability of the body. Additionally, the signifiers of one's gender and sexuality are not only performed and constructed through fashion and clothes, but also the body itself – its nudity, posture, and movement, as well as its relationship with other bodies. For this reason, fashion photography relies heavily on the performance of the male body in encoding homoerotic signs to communicate with those who might detect and decipher them.

The body as image – and indeed *more than image* – in contemporary consumer culture is also of interest to many writers in the field of advertising studies. In contemporary consumer culture, the body no longer represents rationality, civility, moral virtue or spirituality. Different values, such as beauty, success and health, which can be converted to cultural, economic or social capitals, are ascribed by advertisers and marketers to the mediated body (Featherstone, 1982; Geczy & Karaminas, 2017; Patterson & Elliott, 2002). The proliferation of body beautiful and body maintenance in mass media encourages, if not forces, men to look at male bodies in advertisements, and then at themselves in the mirror.

> **The negotiation and renegotiation of male identities is made all the more possible by the increasing visualization of male bodies in advertising and the media. These institutions of consumer culture provide men with both templates for their body/identity projects and, facilitate their experience of multiple subject positions through the production of polysemic texts. Furthermore, the process of identity management is fuelled by commodification and concomitant self-extension practices. (Patterson & Elliott, 2002, p. 241)**

Coinciding with the rise of consumer culture, the 'performing self' links an individual's bodily performance to their identity and worthiness. The body is an expressive body and 'appearance, gesture and bodily demeanour become taken as expressions of self' (Featherstone, 1982, p. 28). Through bodily management and maintenance, individuals are asked to self-monitor and remould their own bodies in order to develop a personality. The aim of this self-mastery technique is not virtuous beauty, but *beauty on display*. The cultivation of the body beautiful is equivalent to the pursuit of moral virtue or a higher spiritual level. Rather, the body is subject to evaluation by one's friends, colleagues, managers, doctors and the government (Falk, 1994; Featherstone, 1982; Turner, 1996). It is hence a body-for-others, to be objectified by other people and commodified by the market.

In the 1968 song '*L'homme project,*' French music artist and songwriter Brigitte Fountaine foreshadowed this change in the perception of the male body and masculinity in Western society.

Que ferais-je de vous mon homme objet
Que ferais-je de tout ce beau palais
De grands muscles si doux et si parfaits
...
Pour vous frôler du bout de mon soulier
Couperais-je vos joues de mon stylet
Pour connaître le goût de vos attraits
...
Filmerais-je vos moues si raffinées
Pour les revoir quand vous vous endormez
Enfin gavée de vous de vos reflets
M'endormirais-je enfouie en vos gilets
Je ferais ça pour vous si je pouvais
Mais je n'ai pas de goût pour les objets

What should I do to you my man object
What would I do with all this beautiful palace
Big muscles so sweet and so perfect
...
To graze you with the tip of my shoe
Would I cut your cheeks off my stylus
To know the taste of your attractions
...
Would I film your slender
To see them again when you fall asleep
Finally stuffed with your reflections
I would fall asleep in your vests
I would do that for you if I could
But I have no taste for objects

(Fountaine & Bloch-Lainé, 1968)

In the music video, Fountaine is singing and dancing next to a male model in a pair of red briefs flexing his muscles in different poses. When Fountaine touches the model's body, her facial expression appears unimpressed. Instead of admiring his hard work, she is more immersed in her own dance, even though her desire towards his muscular body is overtly expressed in the lyrics. The man is an object, and like any commercial good no longer immune to the cruelty of consumerism. The value of an object depends upon its objectifying owner, and not on the autonomy of that object.

Discourse on the body is important to this thesis because of its central role in constructing different formations of masculinity in fashion advertisements. With the male body conceding its mythos of naturalness, the masculinity it embodies must also confront the same challenge.

> **Whatever else it might signal, the recent discursive visibility of masculinity attests to the growing perception that there is nothing whatsoever "natural" about masculinity and nothing preordained about the form it might take. ... [T]he concept of masculinity has ceded its taken-for-granted status, its previous transparency. It is this loss of transparency that is indicated by the term 'discursive visibility,' signalling the ways that masculinity can now be approached as a subject for literary or artistic investigation, a disciplinary object within feminist theory, gender studies, cultural studies, and ... men's studies. Accompanying this discursive visibility, we are confronted with newly minted representations of masculinity that seen particularly feminized in that the male body is presented as an object for erotic contemplation. (Solomon-Godeau, 1997, p. 18)**

By restoring its corporeality and sensuality, a rethinking of the male body in terms of its departure from the realms of rationality and representation of civic values allows sociologists to investigate the constellation of subjectivities extending from, intertwined with and inscribed in the male body, particularly in the context of contemporary consumer and visual culture.

Having addressed the discourse on the body, this thesis now moves on to discuss a new male icon introduced on the market in the 1980s. His arrival in a multitude of fashion campaigns demonstrated a new prototypical ideal of masculinity as promoted by the fashion industry. The advent of the New Man is argued to be a response from the fashion industry to shifting social landscapes in Western society, typified by the de-mythologised male body at the time of sexual revolution, when the social status of women was advancing. This male body was then further problematised by the bodies of gay men. The appearance of the New Man signalled the growth of sexual and sensual male bodies in fashion advertisements. Moreover, drastic developments in media technology, notably of television and the Internet, only served to intensify and accentuate the objectification, commodification and sexualisation of the male body

3.3.
Pink economy and New Man

It's raining men, hallelujah, it's raining men, amen
I'm gonna go out to run and let myself get
Absolutely soaking wet
It's raining men, hallelujah
It's raining men, every specimen
Tall, blonde, dark and lean
Rough and tough and strong and mean

The Weather Girls, *It's Raining Men* (1982)

Since the Gay Liberation Movement of late 1960s and the 1970s, the gay market niche hasa attracted attention from marketers, advertisers and fashion brands. Some have commented that advertisers were intent on 'exploiting the hedonistic lifestyle of the gay scene' to reach gay consumers (Jobling, 2014, p. 170). However, the AIDS crisis in the 1980s caused expansive and traumatic damage to the gay community and certainly gay lifestyles. A turning point in the public's general attitude towards homosexuality came only in the 1990s, caused by a series of events, like the breakthrough in the medical treatment of HIV/AIDS, coming out of certain public figures, and gay pride parades held in various cities, all of which helped to shift the social landscape in Western society (Park, Bryson, Clery, Curtice, & Phillips, 2013; Vänskä, 2017b). These new social movements, which sought to challenge discrimination and stigmatisation of homosexuality, also brought the attention of the business world to the overlooked economic power of the gay community.

The economic power of homosexuals in the 1980s and 1990s, like that of women in the 1960s, encouraged capitalist economies to make place for a gay public in the cultural marketplace. Homosexuals in general have not been anti-bourgeois so much as anti-heterosexist, and the cultural capitalism of the late twentieth century had matured to the point of being able to recognize the difference, and to profit from it. (McNair, 2002, p. 30)

This potential market was named by advertisers and marketers as the *pink pound* or *pink dollar*, terms still used in newspapers and journal articles to this day. Nevertheless, the idea of a pink economy was questioned and criticised by some scholars for its biased focus on white, affluent gay men, and its overestimation of the buying power of the LGBTQ community (Bordo, 1999; Edwards, 1997; Sender, 2005). Whether the size of pink dollar is accurate or overblown, it is true that advertisers and marketers could no longer ignore this potential market. This might have been what inspired some advertisers to use homosocial or homosexual iconography as a means to unsettle conventions of the fashion industry and media, and therefore to reach this new target market. The appearance of ambiguously charged male sexuality in some fashion campaigns may have been an answer from a segment of the fashion industry seeking to extend its consumer base into this uncharted territory (Bordo, 1999; Clark, 1991; Jobling, 1999; 2014; Mort, 1996; Sender, 2005; Soldow, 2006).

As an oppressed minority group, gay men at that time may very well have felt marginalised and victimised by society, and would have liked to 'consume their way gay' in order to show solidarity and protest

against oppression from heterosexual majority (Edwards, 1997; Jobling, 2014; Kates, 2004; Sender, 2005). Consuming, to many gay men, has evolved from a purely individualistic practice for pleasure, to a means of demonstrating one's assimilation into the collective gay identity. After assessing and evaluating the moral backstories and current standing of brands, gay men – and other subcultural groups – reward or punish brands by spending or not spending money on the brands (Kates, 2004). Some brands have earned their legitimacy and loyalty among gay consumers through intimate relationships with the community, while others have been punished for their homophobia. For example, Levi's is verified as a legitimate brand by gay men not only because its historical connection with the pre-AIDS gay lifestyle, but its inclusion and acknowledgement of the gay community in their brand history and advertising strategies (Kates, 2004). A sense of gay identity and community is established through not only through socio-political movements, but also through the ideals of a commercially constructed gay market promoted via mass media (Sender, 2005). The formulation of the gay market was the response of capitalist consumerism to a historically marginalised group seeking to be seen in public and exhibiting profit potential. However, as a newly built consumer group, businesses approaches targeting the gay market were still scrutinised carefully by a heterosexist society (Clark, 1991; Sender, 2005). Instead of speaking directly to their gay consumers, businesses had to transmit the message without alarming social conservatives.

Solomon-Godeau (1997) suggests that the androgynous ephebes of French Neoclassical paintings were in fact subject to the gaze of their fellow male painters and aristocrats due to the exclusion of women from the public and academic sphere. The reason for artists' feminisation of male bodies, she points out, lay in the homophobia and the homosocial environment of the Academy. Androgynous male bodies offered artists and viewers a grey area to negotiate homosexual desire and traditional masculinity with the abstention of female figures and their roles of being the Other. This application of androgyny did not disappear after the end of Neoclassical art movement. Fashion constantly resorted to this technique when it struggled with the tensions between masculinity and femininity (Davis, 1992). A similar means was employed by many fashion advertisers when marketing to fashionable men. *Androgynous marketing strategies* or *dual/double marketing strategies* could facilitate a multifaceted masculinity, including that of gay men, while avoiding alarming, or even offending, the heterosexual majority.

The masculine aesthetics featured many campaigns of Calvin Klein are exemplary of this ambiguous representation strategy, which successfully confused heterosexual viewers, drawing them away from any embedded homoerotic undertones (Bordo, 1999). To pursue of gay consumers without alarming their heterosexual counterparts, a dual marketing strategy for men's fashion was adopted by fashion marketers and advertisers, for the reason that homophobia was still rampant in the public sphere and everyday life.

> **[A]gency decision-making process are designed to stabilize relations between the agency, the client, and other organizations to protect the creative workers and to offer them maximum flexibility. … Agency practices take on particular significance in gay marketing because they must accommodate both the routine and the exceptional – the normal production of advertising that appeals to nonnormative, sexually constituted groups. (Sender, 2005, p. 17)**

The production of images, notably in fashion magazines and advertisements, is always regulated by a 'commercial frame' (Aspers, 2006). From this perspective, the dual marketing strategy adopted by Calvin Klein and other fashion brands was a necessary institutional constraint for safeguarding business interests and avoiding political ramifications.

It was also possible for gay readers to interpret advertisements as targeting at them without intention on behalf of advertisers or brands. As followers of poststructuralism would argue, an image is open to individual deciphering and different interpretation by each reader. Therefore, gay men may employ an insider interpretation for any advertisement to discover clues or references to homosexual intimacy or homoeroticism (Clark, 1991; Kates, 2004; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

> **Unlike ads with explicit homoerotic elements, these ads interpellate gay men in ways which are not evident to most straight consumers. … Gay consumers employ the gaydar, that is the capability to understand from subtle signs whether a person is gay or not, to detect gay subtexts in advertising messages. This does not imply that advertisers actually inscribe such subtexts in their ads. On the contrary, the commodification of gay aesthetics in the production of fashion imagery often produces 'biased' insider readings. (Rinallo, 2007, p. 84-85)**

However, the problem of dual marketing strategy is that once straight male consumers recognised the strategy, it was highly likely that they would respond to it negatively due to their need to retain their traditional masculine identities. The lack of masculinity or incorporation of feminine elements in fashion advertisements could be viewed as a threat to the masculinity of many straight male viewers. For many heterosexual men, it is imperative to dissociate oneself from any indication of homosexuality, including fashion and those 'un-masculine' male models in fashion campaigns, thus the urge to dissociate oneself from or vocally dismiss advertisements connoting femininity or homosexuality (Elliott, R. & Elliott, 2005). This rejection demonstrates how straight and gay men may react differently to homoerotic signifiers in fashion advertisements. For this reason, advertisers must continuously disguise these elements, or seek new strategies to broaden the concept of masculinity. The latter approach lead to the creation of several male figures in the fashion industry, including the New Man, New Lad and metrosexual.

It is crucial to note that not all fashion brands endorse the idea of reaching out to a new potential gay market; in fact, only a few brands have adopted this strategy of ambiguity. Some brands, like Calvin Klein, Dolce & Gabbana, Sisley, Gucci, and Valentino, have long histories of flirting with female sexuality and gender politics in their promotion materials. Therefore, their forays into the territory of male sexuality has been less precarious. It must be pointed out that there are certain prerequisites to the usage of homoeroticism in campaigns, other than the mere decisions of designers or brand owners. By embodying 'local

cultural meanings and related moral demands,' certain brands achieve legitimacy for their alignment with subcultures like gay culture (Kates, 2004, p. 463). Brand image is essential to whether the sexually explicit and homoerotic campaigns are accepted by current and potential customers. Periodicals depicting and distributing homoerotic images have similar characteristics. Magazines like *i.D.*, *The Face* and *Dazed & Confused* all target age groups closer to subcultures and tolerant of homosexuality. It is also worth noting that advertising strategies change constantly for fashion brands, whether as the result of an aesthetic choice by the head designer or a business decision by the brand owner. Some brands abandon titillating campaigns completely; others adhere to the idea of ambiguity; and still others choose to display male sexuality and homoeroticism in a more explicit manner. In any case, brands and editorials must equip themselves with legitimate and shared meanings within the subcultural community, while preparing for the possibility rejection from the general public.

Despite possible negative responses from some straight male consumers, the objectification and sexualisation of male bodies in fashion advertising has been in action since the 1970s. The definition of modern masculinity has evolved and broadened to such an extent, especially in mass media, that some straight men have also experienced this ideological change – men who did not perceive the idea of taking care of one's appearance as feminine or emasculating. Even though there are not clear statistics as to the specific size of this group, an attempt by fashion advertisers to appeal this new potential market – men who buy lifestyle magazines, invest in grooming products and pay attention to the latest trends – resulted in the introduction of the New Man (Jobling, 2014; Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996; Vänskä, 2017b). These advertisements portrayed men as attractive consumers, building a new image of an ideal man through the presentation of work clothes (Steele, 2000). The New Man, however, as suggested by many scholars, was somewhat loosely defined (Chapman, 1988; Craik, 1994; Jobling, 2014; Mort, 1996; Triggs, 1992). He was a combination of several contradictory masculine types, representing different cultural understandings of masculinity.

The image of New Man was constructed by the fashion industry, resulting in a degree of tension between the mediated fantasy built by marketers and the life experiences of ordinary men. Jobling (2014) points out that, according to a 1993 survey conducted by Mintel, less than a fifth of respondents reported that men were supporting their partners in domestic and child rearing tasks. In this case, New Man was a popular myth invented by the fashion industry in response to a growth of male consumption in fashion, grooming products and style magazines.

The changing role of women in society and the changing structure of the family mean that these myths are finding their position of dominance (and therefore their status as natural) under challenge, so advertisers and the producers of the mass media are having to find ways of triggering off new gender myths which have had to develop in order to accommodate the career woman, the single parent, and the "new" sensitive men. These myths, of course, do not reject the old entirely, but drop some concepts from their chains, and add others: change in myths is evolutionary, not revolutionary. (Fiske, 2011, p. 85)

The task of the New Man was to simultaneously live up to the expectation of being a caring father, a gentle lover and a stylish shopper. Yet, as progressive as this hybrid model was, he was inhibited by real-world concerns and practices. This is evident in that New Man was quickly replaced by his successor, the less feminine and more masculine *New Lad* (Edwards, 1997; Patterson & Elliott, 2002). At the same time, transformational codes of masculinity were put on the shelf, and only the idea of consumption in the pursuit of one's sense of self endured. The legacy of the New Man, one could argue, was more about the exercise of advertising agencies and emergence of men's fashion than an ideological change of masculinity in society at large.

Even if New Man did not live long enough to witness the promising changes he prophesied in masculinity, images of semi-naked male models still thrived in mass media and fashion advertisements. The success of brands like Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren and Giorgio Armani proved the depiction of the athletic male body as a charming and desirable object in fashion imagery served business interests, as long as notions of femininity and homosexuality were minimised. Emphasis on the portrayal of male bodies played a central role of the building of modern versions of masculinity in the dual marketing strategy. Androgynous and sexuality-ambiguous male models capitalised on this ambiguity in terms of masculinity and the male body. They spoke to a wider variety of customers, gay to straight, and men to women. This ambiguity continued to grow and expand, helping to incubate the next form of ideal masculinity – the *metrosexual*. If the New Man was an unfulfilled dream of marketers, advertisers and feminists, this new breed of masculinity may have been able to finally bring their expectations to life owing to a new addition to his portfolio – *sports*.

3.4.

Sports and metrosexuals 1: The rise of Beckham

Oh, please
Gay or European?
So many shades of gray
Depending on the time of day
The French go either way
Is he gay or European?
Or-

There! Right there!
Look at that condescending smirk
Seen it on every guy at work
That is a metro, hetero jerk
That guy's not gay, I say, no way!

Musical 'Legally Blond', ***Gay or European***

While new representations of men in the entertainment industry have influenced and changed the perceptions of men toward masculinity and sexuality, the rise of professional sports has also been paramount to men's negotiation of masculinities within modern consumer culture. Once only afforded by aristocrats as leisure activities, the professionalisation of sports began after the First World War. Increasing interest of middle-class men in competitive sports like basketball, baseball and football, created a new industry nowadays worth billions, as well as a new ideal man. Soldiers are praised as national heroes for their contribution and sacrifice on the battlefield; competitive sports are similar to war games. For instance, attempts by the offense in sport games to advance down the field or score a goal are equivalent to military attempts to capture territories on the battlefield. Thus, professional sportsmen's succession to national hero status should be unsurprising. Along with increased access to televisions, the commercialisation of sports, the rise of youth culture and the idolisation of athletes, professional sportsmen successfully defeated many competitors, such as politicians and soldiers, to be crowned as the new idols for ordinary men.

Spectator sports, according to Fiske (1993), are an embodied experience generating pleasures for fans by its capability to invert the knowledge-power system of the workplace in a capitalist society, form horizontal relationships of community and family, and demonstrate the possibility of breaking limitations of normalcy. For many male fans, watching sports also creates a space for intimacy between fathers and sons, without transgressing norms of conventional masculinity. To female (and homosexual) fans, the spectator experience may differ from that of straight men by the reason that 'television close-up and slow motion replays aestheticize the male body and turn it into an object of feminine visual pleasure and therefore power' (Fiske, 1993, p. 87). In short, through the act of witnessing spectacular skill from the athletes and experiencing a game with friends, family and other fans, it is possible for audiences of sports to 'experience identities of their own' and to 'integrate identity with the body' (Fiske, 1993, p. 90-91).

This individualised experience lead to the popularity of professional sports, and subsequently helped many professional athletes to garner, if not surpass, the stardom of Hollywood actors or Billboard artists for their phenomenal performances broadcasted to tens of millions of adoring fans. This can be seen in the case of professional athletes' endorsement earnings, and the number of subscribers to their social media accounts. There are 4 athletes on the 2019 Forbes list of the top ten highest-paid celebrities. Amongst them are footballers Lionel Messi and Christiano Ronaldo, the former earning 35 million and the latter 44 million dollars from endorsements (Forbes, 2019). With over 375 million followers, Ronaldo has more followers than any other person in the world, earning him the title of the 'king of social media' (Badenhausen, 2019). By virtue of the popularity of professional sports, the sportsmen of today have become role models, with their masculinities desired by male sports fans.

Unlike male actors in films or television dramas, the impact of

male athletes on the perceptions of ordinary men toward masculinity is more complicated and conflicting. Male actors on the screen have become more feminine over times, adopting typically female attributes. It is commonplace to feature male characters expressing their emotions, vulnerabilities and pain, as opposed to conventions of orthodox masculinity (Bordo, 1999). In addition, since the 1980s, there have been more and more gay members of the entertainment industry coming out to the public, including Elton John, Ian McKellen and Rupert Everett. Similarly, there was a gradual increase in the introduction of openly gay characters in films like *Maurice (1987)*, *Philadelphia (1993),* and *The Birdcage (1996),* as well as television programmes like *Will & Grace* and *Queer as Folk*. On the contrary, masculinity in the sports industry has grown only more paradoxical since the late twentieth century. Competitive sports are constantly criticised by some social commentators for institutionalising the hegemonic masculinity linked to the reproduction of inequalities and fortification of power structures in a capitalist society (Pringle, 2005). Notwithstanding their aggressive performances in the stadium, unapologetic affection to their appearances of many famous sportsmen cannot be further from the traditional idea of the masculine man. They are as fierce in a stadium as soldiers on the battlefield, yet they take care of their body and appearance attentively after each game. Most importantly, they are not afraid of openly discussing their grooming and skincare routines (Holmes, 2013).

With increased exposure for professional athletes in mass media, their ambiguous masculinity are exhibited in television interviews or in magazine editorials for fans to observe and follow. Furthermore, a certain group of sportsmen make frequent appearance on best-dressed lists in men's lifestyle and fashion magazines. Marketers and advertisers would never miss the opportunity to capitalise on the interests of these sportsmen in fashion, and this gives birth to new kind of collaboration. Fashionable athletes not only successfully secure partnerships with sportswear brands, but also draw in fashion brands with their newly found stardom. This is observable in the case of collaborations between many luxury brands and national teams for important sports events. For instance, Hugo Boss and Giorgio Armani dressed German and Italian national football teams respectively for the FIFA World Cup, and Stella McCartney designed the outfits for the 2016 Great Britain Olympic teams. Moreover, many professional athletes have not only become ambassadors for fashion houses, but aspire to be designers or owners of their own fashion brands. Ronaldo's underwear line CR7 has expanded into a brand including underwear, denim, footwear and fragrances. American basketball player Dwyane Wade, who is well-known for his off-court style, recruited a stylist to revamp his wardrobe to 'include some more conceptual, boundary-pushing outfits from luxury houses' and co-founded a socks brand PKWY with Stance (de Berker, 2017, para. 6).

The concept of fashioning and objectifying the male body has developed into a new popular masculinity. The name of a new fashionable man – the metrosexual – first appeared in a 1994 article in *The Independent* by English journalist Mark Simpson, in which he suggested that the enormous success of test marketing on gay men subsequently made 'the single man living in the metropolis and taking himself as his own love-object' (para. 17) a new aspiring masculinity for non-homosexuals by advertisers.

> **The metrosexual man contradicts the basic premise of traditional heterosexuality – that only women are looked at and only men do the looking. Metrosexual man might prefer women, he might prefer men, but when all's said and done nothing comes between him and his reflection. (Simpson, 1994, para. 16)**

Although the sexuality of metrosexuals was irrelevant in Simpson's text, the metrosexual was later construed by mainstream media and lifestyle magazines as a trend mainly for straight men (Rinallo, 2007). While the New Man was criticised as a popular myth in the imagination of advertising agencies, metrosexuals did certainly exist in everyday life.

If one had to name just one man the epitome of the hybrid image of sports and fashion, English footballer David Beckham would probably be the answer. Paralleling the astounding football career of Beckham has been his incredible fashion influence, to such an extent that the inventor of the term metrosexual crowned Beckham the 'biggest metrosexual in Britain' (Simpson, 2002). As a footballer, he has had a highly decorated career, however, it has been his staggering achievements in the fashion world as an athlete that have made his name synonymous with the metrosexual. His haircut has always been an inspiration for many young male fans, and his athletic body, both dressed and undressed, has been on the covers of many men's lifestyle magazines. Beckham launched his first fragrance in 2005, and signed a £20 million contract with Italian fashion brand Giorgio Armani in 2017, which boosted the brand's underwear sales (Reavis, 2014). Both Beckham and his wife, Victoria, appeared in the 2008-09 Emporio Armani Underwear campaign shot by Mert Alas and Marcus Piggott. Nevertheless, it was the unveiling of an image of him in tight white briefs, holding himself up on parallel bars with muscles flexed, that attracted hundreds of people outside Macy's in San Francisco. Similarly, a six-storey image (*figure 2.*), covering the façade of Selfridges in London featuring Beckham in a pair of black underwear holding a coiled rope, six-pack in full view, was featured by British newspapers (Daily Mail Reporter, 2009). This shot bore excessive resemblance to two works from gay American photographer Herb Ritts, *Man with Chain* (1985) and *Tony with Rope* (1986). Ritts' photographic works frequently featured muscular and naked male bodies, looking like modern incarnations of Adonis. Their 'hypertonic physiques' were captured by Ritts in a classic photographic style, creating a homoerotica linked to classical arts rather than pornographic imagery (Silva, 2007). The Emporio Armani underwear campaign was one of Beckham's non-football career highs, further proving his status as the archetype of the metrosexual.

> **He was evidently straight, but never aggressive or even assertive in a traditional masculine way. In fact, he seemed mild-mannered. He dressed stylishly – if a little too flamboyantly for many tastes – groomed himself painstakingly and appeared unembarrassed when asked about his formidable following of gay fans. (Cashmore, 2013, para. 3)**

While Beckham reached a pinnacle for celebrity athletes, a new all-purpose masculinity began to emerge: a masculinity catering to both women *and* men.

Fashion and lifestyle magazines succeeded in studying and promoting gay men's techniques for fashioning body, and at the same made metrosexuals straight. The metrosexual trend was the inverse of how gay men had appropriated the clothing of straight men. Straight men now become the ones imitating and learning styles and beauty routines from their gay counterparts, even though some of them did not acknowledge it. *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, an American reality television show aired between 2003 and 2007, was the fruit of the metrosexual phenomenon (Sender, 2005; Shugart, 2008). What could be better than having a team of gay 'experts' to help out if a straight guy wanted to

look good and be attractive (to women)? The show demonstrated that straight men living in cities were willing, or even eager, to embrace their feminine (or gay) sides. The advertising and fashion industry successfully commodified the fashion of gay men, a part of their identity formation, and branded it as a style choice for straight men (Clark, 1991). Metrosexuality demonstrated how the concept of masculinity had transformed into a complicated and ambiguous identity present in popular culture, the consumer sphere and the mediated world.

The arrival of the metrosexuals represented another shift for masculinity in fashion advertising. The plurality and diversity of masculinities in mass media and fashion campaigns had been intensifying from the 1990s onwards. More and more fashion brands chose to adopt a metrosexual approach in their promotional materials. Compared to the New Man, metrosexuality, especially that of Beckham and Ronaldo, was deeply associated with the popularity of sports and the rise of sports heroes. Athletic male bodies in sportswear and fashion campaigns subsequently set new standards of masculinity, emphasising ideas of strength and virility (Steele, 2000). These male models represented what modern masculinity ought to be comprised of – youthfulness, a muscular body, a healthy diet, and enthusiasm for sports (McDowell, 1997). Nevertheless, some fundamental differences lay between the male bodies in sportswear adverts and those in sports-themed fashion campaigns, and this was by virtue of the filter of fashion photography. The distinctive and stylised representations of male bodies and masculinities in fashion advertising thus needs to be addressed before this thesis can proceed on to the next section.

Not only did celebrity athletes demonstrate conflicting masculinities, male figures in sports-themed advertisements also manifested mixed signals of masculinity. If one compares advertisements of sportswear brands with those of fashion brands, the distinction is very clear, despite the fact that both are concerned with sports and actions. Most of the advertisements produced by sportswear brands adopt a hard-rock style of man. The male model, very often a professional athlete himself, stands at the centre of the photograph and stares directly at viewers. The stare implies his dedication, willpower and concentration, while his hard torso shows the hard work he invests in himself. Another common theme for sportswear adverts is the use of motion. In this scenario, the model is always in action: running, jumping or kicking a ball. These actions suggest that the man in the photograph is captured candidly, that he is not trapped by viewers' gaze because he will be out of the frame in just a second (Bordo, 1999). Either way, this man demonstrates nothing but the properties of conventional masculinity, with emphasis placed on reason, production and action.

Sports-themed fashion campaigns, however, are immensely different from sportswear advertisements in several aspects. First, fashion photography saw a drift away from acting as product-centred promotional vehicle and towards serving as a medium used by designers, photographers and editors to build fantasies for consumers. The clothes and accessories in a fashion photograph are mere props, while the attention of viewers is captivated by unconventional composites of visual elements. This could refer to anything that challenges the norms of identities like gender, sexuality and masculinity in Western culture – fashion is exactly the site where these tensions collide and compete for representation. Therefore, the concept of sports in many fashion advertisements functions solely as a backdrop, as a part of the setting, while the real subject, the fantasy, stands out.

Second, fashion has dissociated itself from the realm of heterosexual men and their ideas of masculinity; it is not a subject that a straight man should think of and discuss. In fact, straight men tend to dismiss the influence of consumption or advertising in their daily lives (Elliott, R. & Elliott, 2005). Fashion and consumption compelled by advertising are both regarded as feminine activities. Therefore, male models in advertisements already lose a part of their masculinity by being at the centre of different gazes and desires. Male models in advertisements, as a result, must apply strategies to retain their manliness. One of the most employed tactics is to stare back at viewers, the Others (Bordo, 1999). This makes a male model look like a tough guy, who threatens viewers with only his gaze. While the tough guy in sportswear advertisements stares back at the Others, male models in fashion campaigns often do not play in accordance with this strategy. The essence of fashion, with its connotations of femininity and unmanliness, constructs an environment in which a man may be feminine. For many men, it 'makes sense' that male models in fashion campaigns are more feminine, though this does not guarantee approval or interest from straight male customers.

Finally, sport is hardly a cover-up for displaying male nakedness. Responding to an Abercrombie & Fitch advertisement, Bordo (1999) highlights the critical duality of heterosexuality and homosexuality facilitating the ad's ambiguous sexuality and eroticism.

> **[It] depicts a locker room full of young, half-clothed football players getting a post-mortem from their coach after a game. Beautiful, undressed male bodies doing what real man are 'supposed to do.' Dirty uniforms and smudged faces, wounded players, helmets. What could be more straight? But as iconography depicting a culture of an exclusively male bodies, gorgeous, and well-hung, what could be more 'gay'? (Bordo, 1999, p. 183)**

Unlike male figures in sportswear or other advertisements, men in sports-themed fashion campaigns are more than an ideal version of masculinity male readers can look up to and identify with. Male bodies in fashion imagery are at the centre of the projected sexual desires of others. When it comes to male nudity in sportswear advertisements, the controversy and stigmatisation is even greater. For example, in a 1993 Adidas advertisement, all eleven members of a Canadian football team posed nearly naked, genitals covered only by their hands or with a football. Although this photograph was in fact no more explicit than some other fashion advertisements at the time, it was rejected by *Sport Illustrated* (Adidas ad: SI says `no' to male nudity.1993). Nevertheless, the censorship of male nudity in sports, wherein orthodox masculinity is expected to be dominant becomes more complicated and contradictory. In 2004, FIFA issued a ban on the removal of jerseys in matches (FIFA, 2004), though the policy did not stop some footballers from removing their shirts in celebration of a goal and, of course, receiving a yellow card. Meanwhile, footballers of the Italian national team were photographed wearing only briefs in a shower room for a 2006 Dolce & Gabbana campaign.

The discussion regarding metrosexuals in fashion advertising and the distinctive depiction of male models in sport-themed fashion campaigns corresponds to an increasing discursive visibility of masculinity in academic fields of fashion, advertising and masculinity. In its earlier discussion, this thesis addressed the discourse on the male body in modern consumer and visual culture. As an inseparable identity intertwined with the male body, masculinity has also attracted more and more academic attention in recent years. In the next section, two perceptions of masculinity will be explained and compared to establish a clearer view of the relationship between masculinity and subjectivity.

3.5.

Sports and metrosexuals 2: Gramscian and Foucauldian perspectives of masculinities

As discussed earlier, the meaning of gender is generated through the differentiation of masculinity from femininity. By displaying stereotypical properties of masculinity and femininity, advertisements operate in a system of differences (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). One of the most common academic approaches to analysing gender relations is the theory of gender roles. In an earlier section, this thesis addressed the idea that some fashion scholars have argue that gendered fashion, popular since the nineteenth century, is based on a myth that femininity connotes passiveness, domesticity, vulnerability and frivolity, while masculinity represents strength, activeness, production and civility.

By representing these meanings as part of nature, myth disguises their historical origin, which universalizes them and makes them appear not only unchangeable but also fair: it makes them appear to serve interests of men and women equally and thus hides their political effect. ... These meanings of masculinity and femininity were developed to serve the interests of bourgeois men in capitalism – they grew to make a particular sense of the social conditions produced by the nineteenth-century industrialisation. (Fiske, 2011, p. 84)

Representations of masculinity and femininity in mass media feed into doctrines of the gender myth. Divisions of gender occur not only in public and political spheres, but also in the domestic, consumer and personal domains. This 'natural' structure constitutes a binary system in which differences within masculinity or femininity are largely ignored, neglected or oppressed. For structuralists, divisions of gender are products of a deeper structure – the social system of patriarchal capitalism. The gender myth and gendered fashion advertising are manifestations of the patriarchy in action: masculinity and femininity are two dispositional, dichotomous concepts. Men and women are assigned different tasks, with separate designated places in society.

The nature of the gender myth has in fact been under constant challenge for its structuralist explanation, including the idea that gender-roles cannot explain how power functions between different notions of masculinities. According to poststructuralism, there is no universal interpretation of any social identity. The meaning of masculinity, like any other social identity, is always subject to change. Even within a culture at any given time, there is undoubtedly significant ambiguity as to what masculinity means to different individuals (Connell, R. W., 1992; Connell, Robert W. & Messerschmidt, 2005; Nixon, 1997; Pringle, 2005; Sánchez et al., 2009). Properties of masculinity may be perceived in conflicting manners, for instance, by a straight man and his homosexual counterpart. A gay man, comfortable with his own sexuality, may interpret a man showing affection to another man as a masculine act. The same act may be perceived as a risky move by some heterosexual men by reason that any possible notion of homosexuality must be outright rejected to retain the integrity of their traditional masculinity. Like every cultural category, masculinity is an unstable and dynamic identity; it is 'an identity on the move, challenging and transgressing, breaking and resisting gender paradigms' (Karaminas, 2009, p. 149).

The argument against the patriarchy is that it relies heavily on a dichotomy of gender, thus ignoring differences and diversities within each gender. It oversimplifies the power structure and underestimates the agency of the individual. Because gender relations are never stable or fixed, fashion campaigns not only function on a conventional gender dichotomy, but also on the transgression and violation of the binary system. Therefore, one cannot inspect the concept of masculinity only relying on its relation to femininity. Without examining intra-masculinity relations, this thesis cannot investigate homoeroticism in fashion images. This is because the development of homoerotic signs arises from a continued conflict and struggle amongst various forms of masculinity.

Although there is no universal definition of what masculinity is, there is clearly a power structure amongst different forms of masculinity. Certain masculine attributes are perceived as normative and natural by the culture or social grouping. Drawing upon the Gramscian idea of hegemonic culture, the concept of hegemonic masculinity is proposed by some writers as an approach to understand how domination and subordination operate within the field of masculinity. This later became a widely used framework in the study of masculinity (Connell, Robert W. & Messerschmidt, 2005). According to Gramsci, dominant classes of a culture ascend to power through control over a system of beliefs. The main goals of the cultural hegemony are to legitimise its dominance, and to maintain a privileged status by manipulating and convincing residents with the culture into believing that the current set of cultural norms is natural. The concept of hegemonic masculinity demonstrates strength by addressing a plurality of masculinities. It rejects a reductionist perception of patriarchy that 'views men as an undifferentiated group that oppresses women' (Pringle, 2005, p. 263). From the perspective of the cultural hegemony, masculinity is an identity featuring plurality and diversity, amongst which a hierarchical structure of power exists.

Sports are constantly investigated through the theoretical lens of cultural hegemony to elucidate how male athletes construct a hegemonic masculine status.

The analysis of sport and masculinity through a hegemonic lens has, accordingly, facilitated acknowledgment that some sportsmen enjoy greater ability to exercise power than others and that sporting practices contribute to inequitable power relations between males and females. (Pringle, 2005, p. 263)

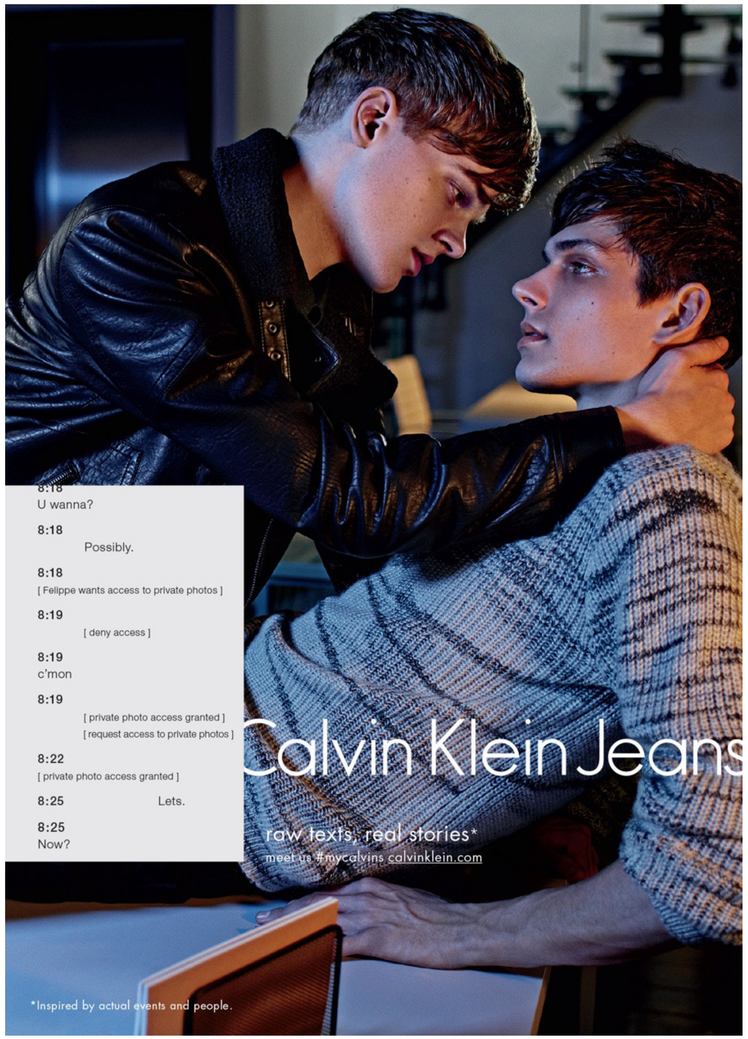

Figure 1. Calvin Klein Jeans 2015 Fall/Winter campaign photographed by Mario Sorrenti (2015).

Figure 2. Revelation of the billboard of Emporio Armani Underwear campaign outside Selfridges in London's Oxford street (2009).

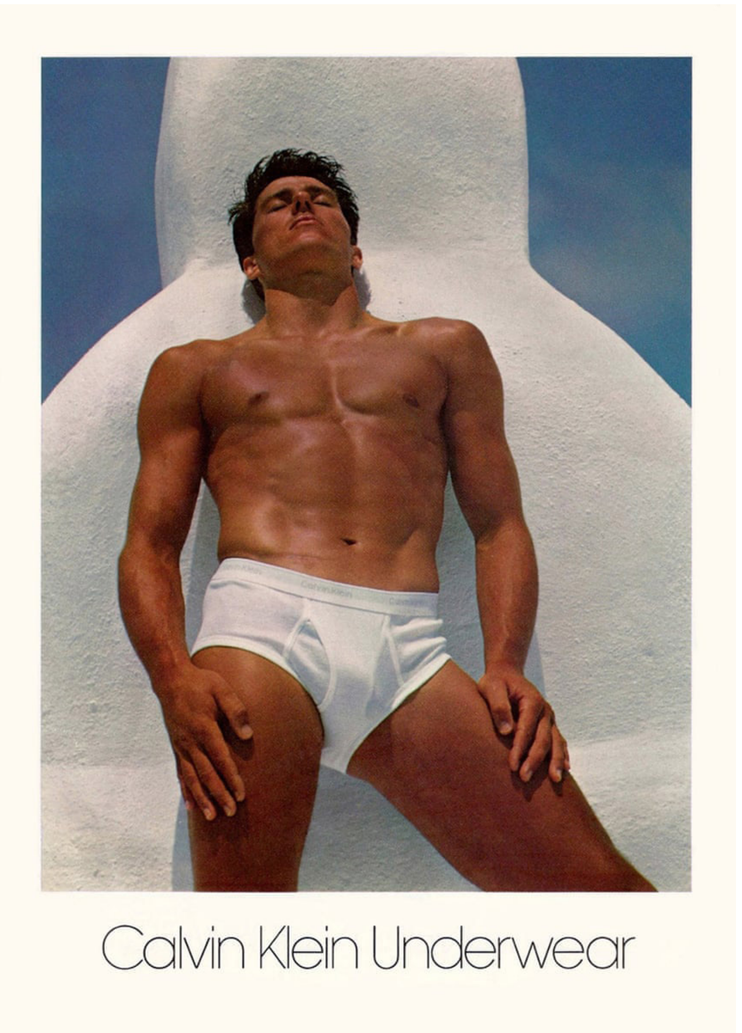

Figure 3. Tom Hintnaus in Calvin Klein Underwear campaign photographed by Bruce Weber (1983).

Figure 4. Dolce & Gabbana 2010 Fall/Winter campaign photographed by Steven Klein (2010).

Figure 5a. The editorial titled 'Veni Vidi Vici' from *Man About Town* 2017 Fall/Winter issue photographed by Mario Testino (2017).

Figure 5b. The editorial titled 'Veni Vidi Vici' from *Man About Town* 2017 Fall/Winter issue photographed by Mario Testino (2017).

Figure 6. Palomo Spain 2017 Fall/Winter campaign photographed by Kito Muñoz (2017).

In contact sports like American football, orthodox masculinity is promoted and encouraged. The overt-masculinity and the idea of the body as a weapon are perceived as a beauty of strength and violence. Even some rational changes to the rulebook in the wake of a concussion crisis were criticised and accused by some enthusiastic fans of 'feminising' the sport (Anderson & Kian, 2012). Likewise, homophobia in professional competitive sports is very common, even in countries with more relaxed attitudes towards homosexuality. In 1990, after he became the first footballer to come out in the history of the Premier League, Justin Fashanu faced immense backlash from his club and opposing fans (Williams, 2013). It was more than two decades that another footballer in the Premier League, Robbie Rogers, would come out, as well as see his departure from the league immediately following the revelation (McRae, 2013). In short, any masculinity that does not fit into the conventional definition of masculinity, may be oppressed by the hegemonic one. Hegemonic masculinity is perceived as superior to others forms, and particularly to those connoting femininity or homosexuality in the media and public domain.

The theory of hegemonic masculinity not only acknowledges the existence of pluralistic forms of masculinity, but also further concurs that the privileged status of hegemonic masculinity is prone to challenge from other forms (Connell, Robert W. & Messerschmidt, 2005). When it is challenged, however, hegemonic masculinity incorporates and adapts characteristics of other masculinities and transforms itself to suit changes in discourses, instead of allowing a subordinated masculinity to replace it and thereby become the new hegemon. For example, in a study on depictions of various masculinities such as the New Lad and the metrosexual in men's lifestyle magazines, researchers found that these forms were not so different from conventional characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (Ricciardelli et al., 2010). The flexibility and malleability of hegemonic masculinity serve to increase its power and help it maintain a privileged status. While male models or sportsmen in fashion magazines may have impeccable fashion taste or athletic bodies, they are still situated in a position within a power structure, and thus subscribed to the patriarchal hierarchy.

The tendency to use a Gramscian hegemonic framework in investigating relationships between different masculinities could, however, prove problematic, due to the framework's simplification of workings of power and generalisation of multiple discourses relating to masculinity. As a neo-Marxist, Gramsci centred his theory regarding cultural hegemony on the ruling classes, who are at the top of the power hierarchy. By identifying the headquarters of power classes, who control the intellectuals, education and the belief system, the theory of cultural hegemony embodies 'strategies for social change with the seductive appeal of the possibility of emancipation' (Pringle, 2005, p. 260). While hegemonic masculinity may be useful in framing the plurality of masculinities, its dualistic generalisations deprive it of the capacity to investigate how the subjectivity of an individual is constructed (Pringle, 2005). A rigid application of hegemonic masculinity is then problematic in analysing how metrosexuals like Beckham or Ronaldo negotiate their subjectivities and masculinities. Ergo, many writers propose inspection of masculinities in fashion advertising through a Foucauldian approach (Nixon, 1997; Ricciardelli et al., 2010; Rinallo, 2007; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004).

There are several similarities between Gramscian and Foucauldian accounts of the workings of power. For instance, both share the belief that power is omnipresent, relative and productive, as well as that the exercise of power by dominant groups is subject to change. Nevertheless, there is an essential difference between their conceptualisations as to how workings of power function. This has resulted in some scholars preferring to use Foucault's power and knowledge discourse to analyse masculinities in visual media. In opposition to Gramscian account, Foucault argues that 'power and knowledge unite and operate within discourse,' and 'there is no single source where the power stems from' (Pringle, 2005, p. 267). Discourses are 'groups of statement which provide a way of representing a particular topic, concern or object' (Nixon, 1997, p. 302).

> **[Discourse] defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others. … It 'rules out', limits and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it. (Hall, 1997, p. 44)**

Moreover, it is discourse wherein 'specific positions of agency and identity in relation to particular forms of knowledge and practice' are produced (Nixon, 1997, p. 303).

> **"The subject" (*le sujet*) is not simply a synonym for "person"; instead the term captures the possibility of being a certain *kind* of person, which, for the theorists who tend to use it, is typically a contingent historical possibility rather than a universal or essential truth about human nature. (Heyes, 2014, P. 159, emphasis in original)**

In other words, subjectivity refers to a historically specific possibility. Subjectivity is not a pre-existing fact or condition, and it cannot exist outside of discourse. Through systems of differentiation and normalisation, in which desired and deviant subjects are created (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 28), certain categories of subjects are admired and encouraged in discourse. This applies limits on individuals regarding their behaviour, conduct and self-formation. Individuals are willing to reinforce prevailing norms by constantly distinguishing themselves from obscure and deviant ones. This conceptualisation of subjectivity opens up the idea that individuals may inhabit diverse discursive subject-positions through different strategies and technologies. The word subjectivation – *assujettissement* in French – is what Foucault uses to describe the emergence of subjectivities or subject positions. 'It describes a double process of the actions of power in relation to selves that is both negative and positive' (Heyes, 2014, P. 160). On one hand, Foucault does not deny the fact that individuals are subject to and regulated by workings of power. On the other hand, for Foucault, power is formative, and it is this enabling feature of power that equips individuals with various subject positions. This is what motivates individuals to adopt strategies or techniques to create 'political mobilization, mutual identification' and 'social spaces' (Heyes, 2014, P. 160).

Unlike in cultural hegemony theory, the enforcement of power in the theory of Foucault does not require consent or identification from individuals. Through bodily practices, a person is subject to the workings

of power. This highlights another important feature of the Foucauldian approach – the centrality of body. As noted in a previous section of this chapter, male bodies are a site of confluence for the discourses of different ideologies, identities and powers in modern consumer culture. Foucault underscores in his work that the body is 'the site for the workings of discourse or power' (Pringle, 2005, p. 261). The body indeed constitutes a critical part of how men produce, negotiate, and reproduce their masculinities. Negligence of the body in Gramscian theory reveals one of the drawbacks of employing cultural hegemony to examine the formation of masculinity. On the contrary, the writings of Foucault reveal how disciplinary powers operate through reconstructing and materially inscribing themselves on the body. Instead of repressing individuals, disciplinary powers aim to wire together the body of the individual and social norms. Individuals are given various identities produced through culturally normative practices (Oksala, 2014).

> **[D]iscipline creates a novel subject-positions: the *individual*. This individual is a conformist, docile, self-monitoring person, who is expected (including by emergent models in the biological and human sciences) to develop in particular ways and is subject to much closer yet more seemingly benign forms of management. (Heyes, 2014, p. 163, emphasis in original)**

The body in contemporary consumer culture is subject to maintenance, improvement, manipulation and reconstruction such that individuals may be self-managed and self-monitored. Bodily practices by individuals contribute to the formation of subjectivities; by imitating and performing a combination of acts, such as looking, moving, posing, dressing and interacting socially with others, men inhabit their masculine subjectivities. The rise of individualism, as a result, encourages individuals to cultivate and manage their subject-positions from the increased variety of personalities offered in contemporary consumer culture, in the same manner they would with their own bodies.

Commenting on the Foucauldian approach, Pringle (2005) concurs that 'an advantage of Foucault's theory of subjectification is that it allows for understanding the constitution of contradictory and unstable subjectivities' (p. 269). Similarly, Nixon (1997) notes that Foucault's idea of subjectivation allows one to analyse the visual codes of new masculinities in fashion advertising from the perspective of a new subject-position within the 'contemporary visual discourse of fashion, style and individual consumption' (p. 303-304).

> **Outside structuralism, more subtle investigations of power discourses become possible, allowing us to reject overdetermined fixations of meaning. … [A]ny structural change in the relations of advertising production or binary coding would axiomatically command representational change. The concept of [Foucault's] limits breaks with this kind of determinism and allows for the possibility of complex discursive interactions within institutional and binary codes. Indeed, taking this approach we can now analyze advertising representations as texts produced at the intersections of representational conventions, changing definitions of target markets, and cultural politics of gender among others. (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004, p. 28)**

Because subjectivity is a historically specific possibility contingent on cultural and social variables, new masculinities in fashion advertising function as plausible options for male consumers to consume and inhabit. New masculinities such as the New Man, New Lad and metrosexual, are some of the historical masculinities spearheaded by market forces in response to social changes. These male figures succeeded, to varying degrees, in feminising and queering masculine conventions in fashion advertising by breaking and transgressing the limits of discourse. By incorporating alternative visual codes, fashion icons like Beckham and Ronaldo generated new masculinities which male readers could inhabit, without unseating prevailing social norms or replacing hegemonic masculinity with some new regime. Consequently, homo-eroticised bodies and masculinities in fashion adverts do not compete for the power position in a hierarchical system. Rather, they are just one of the many subject-possibilities for male readers to adopt, inhabit or reject.

Foucault believes that individuals can never be completely emancipated from discourses and disciplinary powers. Instead, the growth of individualism in contemporary culture has intensified the individual's submission to power. For this reason, Foucault is often criticised for the bodily passivity and lack of agency in his theory of subjectivation, as well as his reluctance to provide concrete tools for social transformation and resistance of power. Many scholars, however, come to Foucault's defence, offering possible responses to his critics, in particular touting his idea of *care of the self* (or *technologies of the self*) as a means to resist disciplinary powers (Heyes, 2014; McGushin, 2014; Oksala, 2014; Pringle, 2005). Subjectivity, as Foucault argues, is not a pre-existing essence. Rather, it is produced within discourses. Different from the confessional self, in which the formation of an individual's self is dominated by 'knowing thyself,' self-expression and normalisation, a technology of the self is a practice focusing on *experimenting* and *experiencing* the actual practice of subjectivation.

> **It is not an attempt to discover a pre-existing substance or essence, but rather part of an effort to *become* a certain kind of individual, to give a distinct form to one's life, to shape, deepen, intensify and cultivate the relationship of the self to itself. (McGushin, 2014, p. 138, emphasis in original)**

The technology of self thus returns individuals their agency within the workings of disciplinary powers, expanding the ability of an individual to be 'free' from the normalised self. Accordingly, practices of grooming, dressing, consuming and looking at a number of new masculinities depicted in fashion adverts are indeed different means to get away from normalised masculinity. Images of new male icons like Beckham and Ronaldo in fashion adverts open up space for 'the display of masculine sensuality,' hence 'opening up the possibility of an ambivalent masculine sexual identity' (Nixon, 1997, p. 328). By consuming these fashion images, the male reader is offered the possibility to shift his subject-position and become a *not necessarily better but different* self.

3.6.
Summary

This chapter began by discussing the development of fashion photography and the rise of titillating aesthetics influenced by changes in the sex culture of Western society, notably the sexualisations of popular culture and mass media. The erotic charge that many fashion images manage to exploit and mediate is founded on the ambiguous and uncertain boundary between pornography and erotica. The paradoxical properties of fashion photography allow it to form a visual arena, wherein photographic realism and consumer desires meet and intertwine with one another. The body as a commodity in fashion imagery exemplifies the sexual and corporeal body emphasised in contemporary discourse on the human body. It is this new visualised and sensual body in which hetero- and homo-eroticism can locate and thrive.

This chapter then moved on to examine historical changes in perceptions of the human body. The body was historically neglected and undermined by prevailing a body-soul/mind dualism in Western thoughts. Nevertheless, since the nineteenth century, with developments in medical technology, knowledge of anatomy, capitalist consumerism, and social movements of women and LGBTQ communities, the body has been sexualised, sensualised, commodified and problematised in Western society. The male body is now subject to academic interrogations of its status as a flesh vessel, in possession of subjectivity and other moral virtues such as civility, enlightenment and intelligence. Moreover, a vast number of visualised bodies in everyday life constitute and intensify its commodification. People are reminded by marketers and advertisers of the body beautiful and are encouraged to invest in their own bodies. Male readers have no choice but to look at male bodies constructed and promoted sensuously by the advertising industry, and to compare those bodies with their own. While sex was devoid of bodily pleasures in the past, the body is full of sexual desires in today's consumer culture. Once a symbol of power, labour and strength, the body has fallen from the mythological sky and onto giant billboards in New York City's Times Square and mobile phone screens. It has become the body *on* and *for* display, one of many objects available for trade.

The body in contemporary Western culture is not a neutral entity detached from the essence of individual subjectivity. Rather, the body functions as a site composed of a variety of subjectivities. Through bodily practices, men construct their knowledge and perceptions of masculinity. In other words, masculinity, like the male body, is not a pre-existing or dispositional property, nor is there a universal or transhistorical definition of it. Masculinity is, like any identity, a historical possibility susceptible to historical, social and cultural variables. Instead of the cultural hegemony and the concept of hegemonic masculinity derived therein, this thesis agrees that Foucaultian subjectivation within the discourses of disciplinary powers is more able to explain the dualistic performance of the masculinity of metrosexuals, especially metrosexual sportsmen like Beckham and Ronaldo. Their status as both sportsmen *and* fashion leaders indicates that they would rather spend time having manicures and pedicures, than worry about the feminine and homosexual notions of being conscious of their own appearances.

New masculinities like the New Man and the metrosexual are plausible identity options for male consumers to adopt and inhabit. Men's understandings and performances of masculinity vary from one person to another, and may be paradoxical and contradictory in the same person by the very reason that masculine subjectivity is always shifting. This interpretation of masculinity affirms a possible coexistence of orthodox masculinity and the masculinity of gay men in fashion advertisements double-speaking to male consumers. In the following chapter, this thesis goes one step further to inspect how the masculinities and desires of gay men are encoded in fashion advertising.

GAY MEN'S DESIRES IN FASHION ADVERTISING

Homophobia in Western society arises from the status of gay men as the Other, 'a countertype to the dominant male stereotype.' As a result, gay men have been forced to either conform 'to the ideal of manhood', or 'to define themselves in the opposition of the ideal' (Stern, 2003, p. 219). Imitating the mannerisms and dress codes straight men was a mechanism for gay men to 'pass' the scrutiny enforced by society upon all men. The adoption of effeminacy seemed to be the only available alternative for gay men within the construction of a binary and structuralist gender system. Lack of representations of homosexual men in both the domestic environment or public sphere resulted in gay men struggling to establish self-esteem and find a sense of belonging (Hicks, 2003). In other words, the stereotypical and derogatory depiction of homosexuality in mass media contributed profoundly in terms of how society and gay men themselves perceived what a gay man looked like.

After decades of gay men being associated with effeminacy and frivolousness by Western media, some members of the gay community started adopting a rugged masculine look to distance themselves from the stereotypical images of gay caricatures. They were called the *Castro clones*, or just *clones*, a gay masculinity arising from a more vibrant and lax gay culture in the 1960s and 70s. This transformation was distinct from the conventional straight acting strategy, which aimed to hide under a heterosexual disguise. Rather, the goal of a clone's appropriation of the fashion and macho masculine demeanour of working-class men was to become sexually attractive to other gay men. Clones' cultivation of their bodies and fashion tastes functioned as a mechanism to secure their places in *the Circuit,* a term referring to social spaces frequented by and designed for gay men, such as cafes, nightclubs and bathhouses (Filiault & Drummond, 2007; Levine, 1998). Moreover, this style of macho clone was for some gay men a response to the derogative notions of homosexuality permeated in society. Therefore, clones were not afraid of revealing their gay identity. The significance of the fashion and bodily practices of clones lied in how they exemplified how gay men could manipulate, distort and perform the conventions of masculinity. It also illustrated the instability and ambiguity of masculinity. In its previous discussion of poststructuralism, this thesis addressed that the meaning of an image is not simply given by its creator, but also constructed by readers. The meaning of an image is the outcome of a complex interaction between creator and viewer within the social and cultural context in which they are situated. Meaning therefore differs from one individual to another, and an image is subject to infinite ways of reading. The fashion codes of clones in the 1970s and 80s were exemplary of poststructuralist reading. For this reason, this chapter begins by examining the masculinity of clones.

The masculinity of clones emphasises a muscular body, manly demeanour and sexual prowess. This was not only influential in the gay community, but also in the fashion industry as well as for heterosexual men. Because of the ambiguous and dualistic properties of gay clones, they later became an inspiration for some fashion brands' constructions of the ideal image of men in their campaigns – a new type of masculinity attractive to both the gay and straight populations. The second section of this chapter inspects how the phenomenon of clones shifted representation of masculinity in fashion advertising and homo-erotised the male body in fashion editorials and adverts. The examination centres on the aesthetics of physique magazines and a 1983 Calvin Klein Underwear campaign shot by Bruce Weber.

Finally, the last section of this chapter is concerned with the concept of the *gaze*, a widely employed investigative position in film studies. Gaze is derived from Existentialism and was brought into the field of visual culture studies by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey, wherein she criticised the male gaze and its underlying patriarchal system. While the idea of male gaze is popular in feminist and film studies, it has been criticised for its structuralist and overdetermined interpretation of a viewer's spectating position and experience. Therefore, this thesis draws upon several writings from other scholars to broaden the idea of gaze and viewing position. As this thesis has pointed out, the mediated male body became problematic due to increasing visual appearances of gay men's bodies the popularity of clones' bodies in the fashion industry indeed opened up the space for gazes of non-heterosexual men to look at male figures in fashion advertisements.

4.1.
The clone: Macho homoerotic icon

You can tell a macho, he has a funky walk
His western shirts and leather, always look so boss
Funky with his body, he's a king
Call him Mister Ego, dig his chains
You can best believe that, he's a macho man
Likes to be the leader, he never dresses grand

Village People, *Macho Man* (1978)

The period from the 1960s to the end of the 1970s is marked as the crucial era when the sexual liberation movement swept through Western countries. Although this movement was advocated by feminists and based on the 'gradual undermining of hitherto solid family values', as well as the advance of women's social status and economic independence, its influence encompassed other parts of society, including LGBTQ groups (McNair, 2002, p. 23). Indeed, many gay activists participated in this movement. The hallmark of the sexual liberation movement also brought the Gay Liberation Movement. The Stonewall Riot of 1969 in New York subsequently led to the gradual advance of gay rights in socio-economic, politico-cultural and legal domains. The process of normalising and de-stigmatising homosexuality was accompanied by proliferating visibility of non-heterosexual people in popular culture and mainstream media. At the same time, gay men, especially those living in metropolitan areas, underwent a change of fashion. This triggered a dramatic change in how men could and would be depicted in fashion advertisements.

The approaches of many homosexual men to traditional masculinity underwent a change in the 1970s. Due to the diversity of subcultures within the LGBTQ community, the general public may perceive members of the gay community as free from gender stereotypes (Sánchez et al., 2009). For example, drag queens and drag kings employ gender stereotypes to challenge the public's understanding of gender. Nevertheless, perceptions of traditional masculinity, which are prescribed and reinforced by a society predominated by heterosexuals, still constitute a significant part of self-image and self-esteem construction for many gay men (Connell, R. W., 1992; Sánchez et al., 2009; Schroeder & Zwick, 2004). This not only reflects on gay men's behaviour, fashion practices and lifestyles, but also on the 'ideal' man that they aspire to become or expect from their potential sexual partner. Before the 1960s, gay men either adopted effeminate stereotypes or imitated straight men's mannerisms to pass as ordinary heterosexuals. The former employed feminine expressions, gestures, behaviours, and appearance to attract more masculine partners, while the latter became 'male impersonators' who 'often overcompensated for their homosexuality' (Cole, 2000, p. 184). This attitude towards masculinity and sexuality began to gradually reform and evolve after the emergence of the counterculture, feminist, and sexual liberation movements in the 1960s (Edwards, 1997; McNair, 1996; Vänskä, 2019). Gay men started realising that effeminacy was no longer a prerequisite of their state. Rather, they started embracing the idea of masculinity (Levine, 1998; McDowell, 1997). Instead of imitating the clothing and behaviour of ordinary heterosexual men to simply pass as straight men, gay men began to both appropriate dress codes and also reveal their sexuality at the same time. As a result, these masculine gays were given a new name – 'clones'.

Clones were gays attempting to dissociate themselves 'from the ridiculed effeminate stereotyped role of other homosexuals and to become a "real man," or at the very least to look like a real man' (Cole, 2000, p. 94). They were invested in building their masculine personalities by appropriating traditional gender conformity. as well as adopting archetypical ideas of the rugged masculinity of blue-collar workers (Dyer, 2002; Levine, 1998). Consequently, the fashion of clones was a combination of many traditions of their predecessors. They were not the first ones to don themselves in the clothing of straight men. There was already a tradition of appropriating the attire of working-class men and those in rough trades, such as lumberjacks, mechanics and construction workers (Cole, 2000; Jobling, 2014). Moreover, more 'rebellious' styles of masculinity, like bikers, existed in gay community well before the rise of clones. However, the crucial difference between clones and their masculine predecessors was that clones did not intend to pass, even though their tactics could still be interpreted as impersonating straight men. Rather, the macho masculine attire and mannerisms were expressions of the clone's newly found sense of self. This shift of style was essentially about sex and sexuality.

For the purpose of 'sexual selection,' the gay community has a long tradition of dressing as the masculine types attractive to their partners (Cole, 2000). Gay men who emphasise their masculine traits tend to seek more masculine partners, while undermining feminine attributes (Sánchez et al., 2009). Clones were exemplary of this tendency, insofar as some of them would not date or have sex with non-clones (Cole, 2000). Despite this, the reason behind the adoption of conventional masculinity was, for many clones, not to pass as straight men. While the clone's attire was the appropriation of heterosexual men's wardrobe, they did not dress for comfort or for work. Rather clones employed their look for physical attractiveness. The goal of donning the look of a clone was then to meet a preferred sexual partner. This intention resulted in the clone's emphasis on the sexual attributes of a man: virility, strength, muscle and, undoubtedly, the *penis*.

Form-fitting Levis and T-shirts typically hugged the body, revealing the contours of their genitals, buttocks, and musculature. … Some men even left the top or bottom button of their Levis undone, in part to signal sexual availability, and in art to suggest that their genitals were so large they had popped a button through sheer size. Others faded the crotch of their jeans through bleaching for a similar effect. … Clones wore waist-length down or leather jackets over Levis. The shortness of these jackets exposed the bulge of their genitals and buttocks. (Levine, 1998, p. 65)

The hyper-sexualisation of clone fashion codes was a direct outcome of sexual drive. Moreover, an immaculate manner was necessary. Having a well built body was not enough for succeeding at becoming a clone. The lifestyle of the clone was achieved through the expertise of gay men in all subtle and nuanced signs – the correct fashion labels, a good diet plan, the right social spaces, and appropriate body posture and demeanour (Cole, 2000). In other words, the construction of the clone identity was achieved through gay men's techniques of self-mastery within consumer culture.

In a 2016 *Attitude* memorial article on Freddie Mercury, late vocalist of the British rock band Queen, Ben Kelly (2016) wrote that the look Mercury wore for their 1985 live performance for the 'Live Aid' charity concert in Wembley Stadium was the Castro clone look. 'Castro' refers to Castro Street in the city of San Francisco, which is considered as one of the most prominent venues for gay liberation movement (McNair, 2002). It is also famous for its gay nightlife scene, just like Christopher Street in New York City. Indeed, the clingy white tank-top and the tight light-blue jeans that Mercury wore were already popular in many gay communities in the 1970s (Cole, 2000; Gaines & Churcher, 1994; Levine, 1998). His moustache and studded arm-bracelet, both of which appeared frequently in gay artist Tom of Finland's illustrations, were also features of the typical clone look. Finnish artist Tom of Finland is lauded for his approach to male figures in his artwork. By exaggerating some male sexual attributes, such as the chest, butt and genitals, he created a new fantasy for gay men (Cooper, 1994; Geczy & Karaminas, 2017; Rossi, 2019; Vänskä, 2019). The exaggeration, or even distortion, of physical attributes of butch men not only generated visual pleasure for gay audiences, but also underlined the sarcastic attitudes of gay men toward conventional masculinity and the challenges they posed to hegemonic masculinity (Bordo, 1999; Filiault & Drummond, 2007). While some criticise Tom of Finland for his stereotypical depictions of macho gay bodies and his emphasis on the sadomasochistic fetishes of gay men, others agree that his works present a new perspective as to how gay men negotiated their masculinity (Bordo, 1999; Cole, 2000). In addition to a parody for gay men of masculine men, the macho gays in Tom of Finland's illustrations were a visual affront againsting the effeminate gay cliché (Vänskä, 2019). The image of Freddie Mercury could be regarded as the result of several social movements in the 1970s, including sexual liberation and the fight of gay men against stereotypes. At the same time, the hyper-masculinity and sexualised male bodies in the works of Tom of Finland augured a new interpretation of masculinity, not only for gay men, but also for their heterosexual counterparts (Vänskä, 2019).

Even though the motive behind the clone's flaunting of his hyper-masculinity and muscularity was mainly about sex and romantic relationships, the look of clones could still be useful for gay men in their daily lives. Because clones employed conventional masculine codes in a gender binary system, there brought no transgressive fashion expressions like effeminate gays did. It was initially difficult for their heterosexual counterparts to tell clones apart from ordinary straight men. The hyper-masculine style confused the heterosexual public. BBC Live Aid concert presenter Paul Gambaccini, quoted in Kelly (2016), suggested that '[t]he majority of the audience watching Live Aid would not have been aware he [Freddie Mercury] was gay' (para. 5). To the concert audience, Mercury's 'theatricality' on the stage was simply a performance for the benefit of his fans. As this thesis has mentioned, to understand the fashion codes of gay men, one needs to be familiar with the gay habitus, yet most heterosexual persons lack this subcultural knowledge. It was of great convenience for a gay man to adopt and perform a machismo and manly self to avoid possible harassment faced on the street. Once the identity of clones was exposed to the general public in mainstream media, however, the confusion it brought to heterosexual audiences was not well-received (Cole, 2000). Macho gays became a potential threat to straight men in a sexual competition, even though it was never the former's intention to attract straight women.

Once the look became popularised in gay communities in the United States and the United Kingdom, the fashion of clones was soon replaced by other subcultural looks. Nevertheless, the masculinisation of gay culture was a legacy passed on to the next generation of gay men. The continual adoption of hypermasculine images by many gay men was, some argue, a reaction to the epidemic of AIDS crisis (Cole, 2000; Jobling, 1999; Levine, 1998). Liberal, lax attitudes towards sexuality and promiscuous lifestyles in gay communities in large cities in many Western countries peaked in late 1970s, before the outbreak of the AIDS epidemic. The general public's attitude towards homosexuality began deteriorating drastically as the AIDS epidemic commenced in the 1980s. Meanwhile, the pursuit of masculine images by gay men intensified. In contrast to the horrific images of suffering and disease, tanned and muscular bodies represented gay men in good health and thereby disassociate them from their inevitable deaths. The fashion of clones did not completely disappear, even as many clones shifted styles, immersing themselves in new subcultures like punk and skinhead (Cole, 2000). The machismo gay culture has survived and even flourished throughout the next couple of decades. Fashion items may have evolved somewhat from the Levi's 501s and white form-fitting T-shirts of yesteryear, yet the essential tactics of adopting manly demeanours and athletic physiques are still very popular in gay communities at the time of writing this thesis.

The importance of clones in the investigation of homoerotic fashion imagery lies in the fact that clone fashion was not exclusive to gay men, at least not after some mainstream fashion brands started appropriating images of clones.

As Calvin wandered through the crowd at Flamingo, the body heat rushed through him like a revelation; this was the cutting edge. These men, these outlaws of society, the temperament, the clothing, the feel, the use of drugs as a propellent, this was what was coming in America: Disco would become the dialectic of the straight population as well. But most importantly, the men! The men at Flamingo had less to do about sex for him than the notion of portraying men as gods. He realized that what he was watching was the freedom of a new generation, unashamed, in-the-flesh embodiment of Calvin's ideals: straight-looking, masculine men, with chiseled bodies, young Greek gods come to life. (Gaines & Churcher, 1994, p.174)

The 'shirtless young men with hardened torsos, all in blue jeans, top button opened, a whisper of hair from the belly button disappearing into the denim pants' at Flamingo and Studio 54, would later be in Calvin Klein's promotional materials and television advertisements (Gaines & Churcher, 1994, p. 174). They appeared in the public squares of major cities, and in the living rooms of conservative households. These disco clones revolted against conventional notions of masculinity and male bodies presented in mainstream media. It was exactly their fashion codes and hedonistic lifestyles that inspired one of the most controversial fashion advertisements – an underwear campaign from Calvin Klein published in 1983. The image, featuring a near-nude male model immersing himself in the enjoyment of being looked at and desired, was almost a snapshot of a masculine gay clone in a disco club of the 1970s.

4.2.
Homo-erotising the lens

Masculinity has become 'a lifestyle commodity to be bought, sold, admired through retailers' windows and aspired to in style magazines, just like anything else' (Edwards, 1997, p. 75). In addition, many new commodified masculinities were published in magazines targeting and subcultures and teenagers, such as *The Face*, *Blitz* and *i.D.*. These titles have since become a platform on which many creative artists challenge conventional understandings of masculinity (Edwards, 1997; Jobling, 2014; Nixon, 1996).

An underlying factor of importance in all of this, though, is the development of style magazines themselves. These currently include such titles as *i-D, Details* and, most importantly, *The Face*, all of which developed in the early to mid-1980s to cater for the tastes of the young, affluent, style-conscious and the often city- as well as self-centres youth cultures, set around strong interests in music, dance and night life. (Edwards, 1997, p. 74)

Economic and demographic changes in Western society have contributed to the popularity of new lifestyle magazines. This also illustrates the concept of *consuming self* permeating contemporary consumer culture. Consuming was once a gay man's technique for constructing a gay identity and sense of belonging, yet capitalist consumerism in Western society has successfully promoted narcissist masculinities to wider audiences through a swarm of visualised, sexualised and sensualised male bodies in newly published lifestyle magazines.

Fashion imagery has gone through a process of sexualisation and pornification from the 1960s onwards. Moreover, this development has only continued to intensify, with no signs of stopping (Bordo, 1999; McNair, 2002; Merskin, 2006).

Call it the new voyeurism: the middlebrow embrace, in the age of AIDS, of explicit erotic material for its own sake. From Mapplethorpe to MTV, from the Fox network to fashion advertising, looking at sex is creeping out of the private sphere and into the public, gentrified by artsy pretension and destigmatized out of viral necessity. Canny marketers exploit it; alarmed conservatives, joined by many feminists, are trying to shut it down. ... Advance cover stories on the book in Vanity Fair, Vogue and New York Magazine heralded hot like you've never seen before. (Leland, 1992, para. 3)

Not long after Bourdin's famous shot for Charles Jourdan in 1978, the sexual explicitness of fashion photography crossed the gender boundary to men. By the 1980s, some fashion photographers had started experimenting on erotising male bodies in their works. The portrayal of male bodies, in particular naked ones, was undergoing a substantial transformation resulting of the rise of popular culture, the sexualisation of mass media and the increasing presence of gay culture.

Before the commodification and sexualisation of male bodies in fashion advertising, male bodies underwent a similar process in another subcategory of periodicals. By the 1950s in the United States, puritan concepts of the male body as an emblem of morals, civics, reason and other abstract values were challenged by men's physique magazines. The first male physique magazine, *Physique Pictorial*, was published by photographer Bob Mizer in the 1950s. It was not the first magazine featuring male bodies sans clothing, as photographs of near-nude men had been published as early as the 1930s in other subcategories of men's health and sports magazines. It was nonetheless *Physique Pictorial*'s approach to male bodies that essentially separated it, and physique magazines in general, from other men's magazines.

Instead of being innovative or outrageous, Mizer's photographs were, in fact, quite vanilla compared to those of other contemporary photographers (Hooven, 1995) – he did not even shoot full frontal nudes of the male models. The spectacular success of *Physique Pictorial* was not due to the sexual explicitness of its images, but rather the context with which those images were placed.

What Physique Pictorial did was to strip away all that obfustication *[sic]*. A glance through the magazine made it instantly clear that it celebrated the male body with a directness that had not been seen since the collapse of the Roman Empire. No serious attempt was made to gloss over the fact that those attractive young men were naked to be looked at and enjoyed. (Hooven, 1995, p. 50)

Unlike other periodicals, physique magazines challenged the conventional ways of depicting male bodies. The naked presence of male bodies in conventional sports magazines must have had non-sexual 'purposes,' to 'inspire ideals of health – mental, moral as well as physical – and not for anyone's mere enjoyment' (Hooven, 1995, p. 46). On the contrary, the ripped and athletic bodies in *Physique Pictorial* and other muscle magazines were made purely for the pleasure and enjoyment of readers (Henning, 2004). These to-be-looked-at male nudes soon became collectible items for gay men, at a time when homosexuality was still subject to persecution and harassment.

Before the sexual liberation of the 1960's, women's desires were constrained to the domestic sphere, while gay men's were prohibited outright. The male bodies in Mizer's periodical were believed by authority to be for the pleasure of non-straight men – gay men and maybe even some women. It was exactly the covert homosexual sex appeals in physique magazines that made them subject to the scrutiny of the police and moral conservatives. In order to avoid censorship from authority and prosecution by law enforcement, physique magazines needed to employ tactics to disguise themselves as legitimate men's lifestyle magazines. At first, they branded themselves as conventional bodybuilding magazines. Then, they claimed that the naked male body in prints was, in fact, an artistic expression. Because representations of near-naked male bodies had always been allowed in artwork, it followed that they should also be allowed in muscle magazines. This tactic aroused a long-running debate on nudity in high culture and mass culture. McNair (1996) contends that the division between erotica in art and the titillating nudes in physique magazines was means for the ruling class to retain the power over ordinary people. It was merely an intellectual power play for many art critics to claim that the depiction of nudity in mass culture was pornographic and obscene, and should be censored and undermined. This division should be dismissed in a postmodernist society because it assumes there is only a linear, top-down movement of knowledge, failing to acknowledge the value of mass culture and bottom-up social movements.

While male bodies in muscle magazines were one transgression of conventional masculinity in mass culture, another transgression was concealed in the work of gay photographers like Robert Mapplethorpe, Arthur Tress and Jean-Marc Prouveur. Instead of merely documenting clone trends in the 1970s, the work of gay photographers participated in the growth of gay men's admiration for muscular bodies (Cooper, 1994). Influenced by homoerotic drawings from artists like George Quaintance and Tom of Finland, both popular within the gay subculture scenes, Mapplethorpe's photographs depict the hyper- sexual and sensual side of gay male bodies (Cooper, 1994). The realistic character of photography made his works even more shocking than the drawings or paintings by other gay artists. Blatant images of gay sex and BDSM scenes shot by Mapplethorpe were intended to challenge the boundary between pornography and erotica with pictures that were both visually erotic, as well as artistically beautiful (Cooper, 1994). Photographic depiction of male nudity was then picked up by fashion photographers like Herb Ritts and Bruce Weber. While their works for fashion brands would not show the genitals of the male models, the overt explicitness displayed in their photographs still had profound effects on the gradual process of homoeroticising male bodies in fashion advertising.

Weber's photoshoot for the launch campaign of designer Calvin Klein's underwear line produced what was probably the most historically significant homoerotic fashion photograph, one that still has far-reaching impact on how masculinity is being depicted in today's fashion visuals (Barron-Duncan, 2017). This campaign, featuring the Olympic pole-vaulter Tom Hintnaus as the model, paved the way for a new genre of fashion photography in which male bodies were worshiped, admired, deconstructed and most importantly, sexualised (Bordo, 1999; McDowell, 1997). Unlike the advertisements of other underwear brands at the time, Weber's photograph for Calvin Klein was overtly sexual and erotic.

[T]he model's facial demeanor is "feminine," for his gaze is averted, allowing no eye contact, and his posture is one of sexual supplication. He projects passive receptivity and vulnerability, for he is looking downward. Most tellingly, the ad challenges the traditional phallic symbolism that establishes generic male superiority to all women by giving cultural permission to women to be voyeur of men. What is new here is the role reversal in the gaze, in which a near-naked man is the object of the sexual gaze, and men *and* women are presumed to be gazers. … [T]he ad presents a man who is stared at, a passive body dependent on another's gaze, which overturns male cultural conditioning to avoid being put in a vulnerable position where one can be sized up. (Stern, 2003, p. 224, emphasis in original)

The desirability of this toned, athletic and semi-naked hunk was so powerful that many of the posters that Klein had posted at New York City bus stops were stolen overnight. The image was later named by photography magazine American Photographer in 1989 as one of the ten pictures that changed America due to the tremendous shock it brought to the American public with its representation of the sexual liberation of men (Bowermaster, 1989). The campaign marked a turning point in the transformation of masculinity in Western cultures in the late twentieth century. The man on the billboards and promotional posters was a man not afraid of flexing his muscles and showing off his naked torso in front of strangers, or more specifically, customers. The male body evolved from a mere tool for work and competition and an emblem of enlightenment and values, into an emotional and sexual commodity for consumers to purchase with money.

The overt sexual and homoerotic connotations in Weber's work for Calvin Klein were not only a result of Hintnaus' naked body. In fact, it was not rare for male underwear models to reveal their semi-naked bodies in advertisements. It was the model's narcissism and self-absorption that brought homoeroticism to the image (McDowell, 1997). Unlike previous underwear campaigns wherein male models were captured in assertive poses, or in the middle of performing some action, Hintnaus was doing nothing other than standing and bathing himself in the Greek sunlight, and perhaps contemplating his own beauty. From a conventional perspective of masculinity, the straight man should not be narcissistic or self-absorbed, nor should he appreciate or obsess over his physical body.

In this one shot, which was made in Santorini, Greece, Weber made men the focal point of sexual attention; for the first time, they were sold as sexual objects, not breadwinners or authority figures. The real impact lay in the picture's appeal: Women liked it and so did men – gays and heterosexuals alike. Forget John Wayne. In the 1980s we finally found out what comes between a man and his Calvins. (Bowermaster, 1989, p. 36)

The model capitalised on what traditional masculinity could not offer – an ambiguous combination of masculinity and femininity. He became a modern incarnation of a Greek god, with the mind of Narcissus and the body of Adonis. Furthermore, his hybrid characteristics simultaneously responded to homosexual *and* heterosexual desires.

The inspiration for the Calvin Klein campaign was not heterosexual man's ensemble of a white T-shirt and blue jeans. It was the clone's version of masculinity that influenced men's fashion in the next couple of decades. The narcissistic man in the campaign he had no problem with his naked body being looked at and desired by others, therefore could not be straight. Indeed, he relished in being mesmerised by the sensuality of his muscular body. From a postmodernist perspective, the body is loaded with signs of ideologies and values. It is the complexity of fashion communication, as well as the instability of masculinity and sexuality that allow a discursive male body – a venue capable of facilitating a plurality of gazes.

4.3.
Whose gaze?

One theoretical approach to investigating fashion imagery is the concept of *the gaze* as proposed by existentialists in the mid-twentieth century. The gaze was brought to prominence by British film theorist Laura Mulvey in her 1975 essay *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*. Using a psychoanalytic lens, she examined the functions of woman figures in conventional cinema, along with the gaze from both male actors in the films and male audiences in theatres. Mulvey (1989) suggests that gratification and pleasure stemming from the watching conventional films are a result of consecutive events concerning scopophilia, narcissism and the constitution of one's ego. The principle of 'men look, and women be looked at' consists of two main factors: *objectification* and *identification*. Cinema theatres create a quasi-private world for male audiences to exercise their active looking, fulfilling their desires to objectify another person as well as their voyeuristic tendencies. Meanwhile, male viewers project themselves onto male characters in films, becoming narcissists by identifying with those actors.

It is not surprising that concept of the male gaze is employed for the analysis of fashion images and fashion films. While Nixon (1997) doubts whether one can simply apply the account of spectatorship and viewing positions as in narrative cinema to fashion images in a magazine, many fashion writers still adopt the idea of the gaze in their investigations of fashion visuals. While the principle of 'men act, and women appear' may appeal to some scholars as an explanation for how sexual politics work in fashion advertising, one strand of literature has questioned the monolithic sexual discourse in Mulvey's theory (Drukman, 1995; Kaplan, 1990; Nixon, 1997; Patterson & Elliott, 2002; Vänskä, 2005). Two major concerns are raised regarding the notion of the male gaze. First, the look in Mulvey's account is gendered and fixed. This structuralist approach to visual culture is dismissed by poststructuralists. It is problematic to argue that only women are subject to the gaze, or they are always the ones *to-be-looked-at* (Kaplan, 1990). In other words, limiting the owner of the gaze to men implies a passiveness and inability to look on the part of women. This strips them of their agency in a structuralist and deterministic power structure of gender. It also ignores the fact that men can be subject to the gaze of other men and women, and fails to investigate how straight men look at unconventional representations of masculinity in media. Secondly, it assumes that the process of identification aligns strictly with sexual differences. The theory of the male gaze does not explain how other groups, who do not identify as heterosexuals, look at male and female figures in media. A gay man, for example, may identify with male *and/or* female characters in films. To suggest that an individual's sexuality determines which film character they would identify with is heterosexist and reductive. These critical limitations on the male gaze have prompted many writers to offer more dynamic approaches to conceptualise ways of looking.

Before this thesis addresses the variety of approaches to the gaze, it is necessary to point out historical factors in the development of the male gaze in film theory. It has been argued that the Hollywood of the 1970s, when Mulvey's text was published, was dominated by male directors armed with the invincible male gaze. Nevertheless, the evolving sex culture has pushed the Hollywood film industry as well as the fashion advertising agencies to adopt a new power dynamic of gender and sexuality (McNair, 2002). Western societies witnessed the intensified objectification of men in mass media in the late twentieth century. A male figure, no matter where he is, has become a passive object, subject to the gaze of all. This marketing-led force has contributed to a significant increase in the exhibition of male bodies since the 1980s. As a result, men are 'encouraged to gaze upon images of other men and, thus, the gaze, as it is traditionally conceived, is being turned in upon itself' (Patterson & Elliott, 2002, p. 236). This trend has led scholars to examine viewing manners of male consumers in relation to different representations of masculinity in advertisements.

The inversion of the male gaze contradicts the idea that the gaze lands only on women. Indeed, male figures in media have also become the subject to the gaze of straight men. While his explanation of how fashion photography inspires and reinforces gendered roles is limited to women's lifestyle magazines and their audiences, Barnard (2002) contends that men 'are being offered the chance to survey themselves as they might appear to women' by comparing women's and men's fashion magazines (p. 118). Similarly, Jobling (1999) questions where male readers of magazines like *The Face* and *Arena* truly lay their eyes if men only look at women, doubting 'whether women take the phallic body as seriously as men do, or have the same perspective of desire on it' (p. 167). Referring to research demonstrating that women feel more threatened than enticed or desiring when it comes to muscular men, he contends that the male body in fashion spreads may be primarily for the pleasure of their fellow male readers. In fact, it is men who normally show the appreciation and admiration for muscular male bodies. 'The cultivation of muscles' thus 'offers an idealised image of masculinity that appears to transcend the norm of polarised gender positions and sexualities for both straight and gay men' (Jobling, 1999, p. 169). In fashion advertising, the male body is a site of fantasy, desire and vulnerability for the pleasure of others. Furthermore, male models in fashion advertisements are neither exclusive to the gay man, who wants to be desired by a man such as the model, nor to the straight woman, who wants her partner to be as attractive as the model. The properties of success and achievement relating to orthodox masculinity are not limited to areas of work, business and wealth anymore. Having a *body beautiful* like those in men's underwear campaigns has become a new category for evaluating one's manliness. The idea of the inverted gaze opens up space for men to shift positions as subjects as well as 'move through a range of responses such as rejection, identification and desire' when they look upon other men in advertisements (Patterson & Elliott, 2002, p. 241).

Critics of the conventional gazing system also reject the link between submissiveness and being-looked-at proposed by existentialists within a reductive and dichotomous gender structure. For instance, many gay men find pleasure in both looking and being looked at by other men. They are willing to submit to the gazes of others because they want to be desired or objectified by the Other. In this way, a narcissist, refers not only to one desiring of his own reflection, but also to one who identifies with his idealised self in the gazes of others (Holliday, 2001; Patterson & Elliott, 2002; Rinallo, 2007). In this case, an individual's gratification arises from their subordination, desirability and the act of being looked at by those whom the person wants to become. Therefore, the traditional explanation a power play based on gender roles and patriarchal structures cannot account for the power dynamics between individuals adopting both the roles of looking and being looked at.

While some writers address the to-be-looked-at-ness of men through the idea of an inverted gaze, others offer an even more dynamic approach to disrupting conventional understandings of gaze. Instead of inverting the male gaze, Schroeder and Zwick (2004) contend that with the concept of limits and a visual genealogy inspired by Foucault, it is plausible to extend the limits of advertising discourse, hence expanding the gaze and opening up the space for new male identities. Even though they acknowledge a possibility of a gay reading for every advert in their analysis, their account of the shifting gaze still moves between boundaries of gender oppositions. To further challenge and break the conventions of gaze, some writers disregard the centrality of heterosexuality in conventions of male gaze and psychoanalysis stemmed from Freud's heteronormative interpretation of sexuality.

In analysis of the look and the gendered positioning of individuals, there is a search for the positions of looking given by particular visual texts in terms of the fundamental tropes of sexual difference – active/passive; masculine/feminine; mother/son; father/daughter. Subjectivization, then, is conceptualized in these accounts as being secured through the reactivation of the fundamental positions of identity with Freud posits – ultimately, always in the terms of the Oedipal order. Historical and social factor which determine identity are – in the end – reduced to the calculus of psychosexual structures. In addition, the emphasis on psychosexual structures produces a reductive account of identity conceived fundamentally in terms of sexual difference. … Other determinants upon identity (such as class) are effectively sidelined. (Nixon, 1997, p. 321)

Drawing upon the concept of 'perverse desire' in Teresa de Lauretis' *The Practice of Love* (1994), Vänskä (2005) employs the 'non-Oedipal and non-heterosexual desire' in her useful investigation into feminine and femme-inine viewing positions in fashion advertisements. She suggests that there is 'a legitimate lesbian desire between two feminine women, and transgress the categorical boundaries of gaze and desire,' thus any attempt 'to make clear-cut categories of gaze and desire' becomes problematic (p. 69-70). Similarly, Drukman (1995) incorporates the concept of gay sensibility in the work of Richard Dyer and Vito Russo into his examination of MTV music videos, assuring a probable gay reading in relation to contemporary visual media. Both accounts reject a prevailing heteronormative spectatorship and propose different ways of looking, thereby securing a possibility of shifting viewing positions outside of a determined and fixed gender structure.

By incorporating a variety of feminist, queer and men's studies, the concept of the gaze has evolved and expanded into a more diverse and dynamic system since its inception in the field of film theory. In other words, it is not only straight, white, middle-class men that have the 'power to look,' but anyone can gaze at anyone. Moreover, any spectator position is unfixed and moveable, as Vänskä (2005) asserts that 'all spectator and desiring positions are in a constant process of transformation' (p. 80). Browsing fashion images ordains a reader with the possibility of inhabiting various subjective positions, as well as shifting their own gaze and desires. To further challenge conventions of the gaze, Vänskä (2005) argues that, by opening up the space for other sensory charges like somatic and tactile senses, the power position of looking in advertising is debatable. While the concept of gaze is still critical to the analysis of fashion images in this thesis, it is important to note that the power of looking, as once purported by existentialists, is in fact not steady or safe in the discourse of advertising.

4.4. *Summary*

Building on the previous chapter, which addressed discourses on the male body and masculinity, as well as new masculinities in fashion advertising like the New Man and metrosexual, this chapter further discussed the historical context of homoeroticism in fashion advertising by reviewing muscle magazines and the fashion of clones. Few persons in contemporary Western culture would fathom the idea that the male body was a site of controversy, confrontation and rebellion before the mid-twentieth century. Hostility towards public exhibition of non-conforming male bodies that showcased feminine, non-heterosexual and hedonistic attributes was Western patriarchal system's response to a postmodernist transformation of the once labour- and value-loaded male body. Consequently, the male body was subject to censorship and suppression, as demonstrated in government ordinances prohibiting the public circulation of muscle magazines, as well as in condemnation from social conservatives of fashion advertisements featuring nearly-naked male models. Despite this, the male bodies in featured in physique magazines later went on to serve as inspiration for many clones.

Clones donned the clothes of blue-collar workers, adopted manly demeanours maintained ripped and well-developed builds, and boasted of their sexual prowesses without passing as straight men. The rise of clone fashion and mannerisms indicated a change in the self-perception of many gay men and challenged stereotypes regarding homosexuality in Western society. The fashion of clones was later borrowed by fashion designer Calvin Klein and photographer Bruce Weber to create one of the most iconic homoerotic fashion images – the 1983 Calvin Klein Underwear campaign featuring Olympic Vaulter Tom Hintnaus. The male body in this advertisement evolved into a fleshy site facilitated by the desires of gay men due to the link between the body of the clone and the identity, hedonistic lifestyle, consuming patterns and sexual pleasures of gay men. The Calvin Klein image exemplified the double marketing strategy of fashion advertisers, a strategy employing specific textual or visual codes that might be discerned by gay readers without offending heterosexual population. While a double marketing strategy helped advertising agencies and fashion brands to incorporate gay desires in their campaign semiotically, that is not to say that every homoerotic campaign is *intentionally* designed to arouse gay viewers. Rather, double marketing strategy substantiates a poststructuralist contention in that meaning is generated from a reader's negotiation between an image and their personal experience, knowledge and identities. This affirms an individual's agency to inhabit and negotiate their own viewing positions. As a result, the gaze is never fixed or immobile. The concept of the male gaze is thus problematic because it limits the viewing position within the predetermined notions of the patriarchy. Within contemporary consumer culture, when men are left with no choice but to look at images of other men *and* themselves, the male gaze becomes inverted. The possibility of female or gay gaze further disrupts conventions of the gazing system. Mediated men are identified with and objectified by both male *and* female audiences. Instead of relying on the male gaze, this thesis draws upon a more dynamic approach, a mobile and fluid spectatorship and shifting subject positions, to investigate homoeroticism in fashion adverts.

So far, this thesis has reviewed several discourses vital to the investigation of homoeroticism in contemporary fashion advertising. The next chapter draws upon the elements from the entire thesis, tying up various theoretical strands to present four visual analyses demonstrating different angles from which to decode the homoerotic signs embedded in fashion advertisements and campaigns.

VISUAL ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This thesis now moves on to examining homoeroticism in contemporary fashion advertising within the theoretical framework laid down in previous chapters. This chapter is divided into four sections, with each section presenting one or two fashion images. These images come either from the advertisement of a fashion brand or an editorial published in a men's lifestyle magazine. Each of the images incorporates different homoerotic signs and styles. For this reason, this thesis utilises different angles to inspect the homoeroticism embedded within them.

Since Apple launched its first iPhone in 2007, the world has gone through the smartphone boom. The internet feature of smartphones has brought customers closer than ever before to fashion advertisements, magazine editorials and fashion films. The development of mobile technology has also changed consumer practices in terms of viewing fashion images, as well as presented challenges to traditional two-dimensional publications such as fashion magazines (Crewe, 2013; Karaminas, 2012). It is nowadays commonplace for smartphone users to view fashion images online anytime and anywhere. The experience of seeing is therefore different from that in the past, when printed fashion images were mainly reserved for those with access to fashion magazines and brand catalogues. This thesis acknowledges this transformation in viewing practices and the experience of fashion visuals. To this end, all selected images were published between 2010 and 2017, and retrieved from two online websites founded post-2007 – The Fashionisto and Fucking Young! (The Fashionisto was founded in 2008 and Fucking Young! in 2010). Both websites started as online platforms mainly featuring men's fashion campaigns and editorials, unlike established publications like *GQ* and *Esquire,* which tended to cover other topics related to men's lifestyles, such as health, fitness, grooming and culture. The 'indie' status and certain Internet characteristics furthermore provided the possibility for independent talents from around the world to showcase their photographic works to a global audience (Brannigan, 2018; Crewe, 2013). As Carl Barnett, founder of The Fashionisto, said: '[h]aving editorials online is great because you get to see a selection of what creatives are producing world-wide' (Emily, 2011). In addition, these platforms have helped to distribute homoerotic fashion images to a wider audience by incorporating social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram. This contemporary timeframe is critical to this thesis' investigation, as many of the homoerotic signs in the images concern aspects of contemporary gay culture, for example dating applications and social media. Moreover, these images function as a point of comparison to past homoerotic images like the 1983 Calvin Klein Underwear campaign (*figure 3.*), as well as demonstrate the ways in which the operation of homoeroticism in fashion advertising has evolved.

Regarding the sources of the selected images, all but two are campaign images from three fashion brands, including Calvin Klein Jeans, Dolce & Gabbana and Palomo Spain. The other two images were selected from an editorial in the men's fashion magazine *Man About Town*, a bi-annual British men's lifestyle magazine founded in 2007. The magazine targets affluent men between 30 and 45 years old, and includes articles related to fashion, technology and business (Marketing Week, 2007). According to its website, *Man About Town* is a publication for 'the confident, intelligent, luxury-conscious man of today' who is 'trend and news savvy' (Man About Town, n.d.). All three of the fashion brands have specific aesthetics in their menswear advertisements. Calvin Klein Jeans' advertisements, for example, have a history of controversy. For example, its 1992 campaign featured skinny chick Kate Moss and muscular hunk Mark Wahlberg showcasing its notorious 'heroin chic' aesthetic, which was criticised at the time by U.S. president Bill Clinton for its glorification of heroin addiction (Arnold, 1999; Trotman, 2014). The brand's 1995 campaign, shot by Steven Meisel, was accused by conservative commentators and religious institutions of constituting child pornography, resulting in the company pulling all adverts due to the backlash (Elliott, S., 1995). Italian fashion brand Dolce & Gabbana has collaborated with photographer Steven Klein for several years to produce a legion of menswear advertisements usually featuring a group of muscular male models performing some sort of activity, either clothed or unclothed. Lastly, Palomo Spain has been praised for its unique approach to menswear fashion by incorporating feminine elements into its design. Its campaigns are often shot through 'a distinctly queer lens,' demonstrating the modern indeterminacy of sexuality, sensuality and masculinity (Michael, 2019).

This thesis recognises that there are differences between the spectator experience of fashion campaigns and that of fashion editorials. Nevertheless, online browsing has changed the way people read fashion editorials such that the viewing sequence is now less important. Thumbnails, smaller copies of the original pictures, help to display every shot of an editorial or in a series of adverts in a single webpage. In addition, the flow for fashion advertisements and editorials becomes identical through the act of scrolling, wherein it is commonplace for fashion photographers to incorporate a plot into the fashion advertisement. Still, this thesis focuses on various homoerotic charges within single frames, instead of a possible homoerotic plot in the entire series of images. By excluding other pictures in the campaign or editorial, this thesis can analyse fashion images individually without addressing the narrative of each photographic series. This makes the inclusion of editorial photographs in *section 5.2.* acceptable and within the scope of fashion advertising.

This chapter begins with an inspection of an image from the Dolce & Gabbana 2010 Fall/Winter campaign, shot by Steven Klein. In this inspection, the interplay between the idea of homosociality and the continuum of homosexual desires is addressed. Next are two images chosen from Mario Testino's editorial shot for the *Man About Town* 2017 Fall/Winter issue. There, the focus is on a semiotic explanation of spornosexual bodies and their homoerotic connotations addressing homoerotic charges brought on by viewers' affective responses to the two images. The third section of this chapter aims to broaden the scope of homoeroticism by analysing Palomo Spain's queer alternative to macho homoeroticism, which features ectomorph bodies and the art of camp. In the final section, this thesis proceeds to investigate an image from the Calvin Klein Jeans' 2015 Fall/Winter campaign. It inspects homoeroticism embedded in the practice of sexting, drawing upon the collective life experiences of gay men's and the gay community's shared knowledge of online dating.

5.1.

Homosexuality and bromance: I love you, no homo

Figure 4. was chosen from a group of eight images from the Dolce & Gabbana 2010 fall/winter campaign shot by American fashion photographer Steven Klein. Klein is well known for his 'hyperreal, pin-sharp and sexually charged' photographic works that constantly demonstrate 'undercurrents of vulnerability, objectification and idolatry' (The Business of Fashion, n.d.). This aesthetic was epitomised in his fashion editorial inspired by the movie *Fight Club* (1999) for the July 1999 issue of *W* magazine. Actor Brad Pitt was captured with his naked buttocks almost exposed to viewers in a two-page spread. His hardened torso and shaved head demonstrated some representative patterns of how metrosexual masculinity and the body were presented in a fashion imagery. Above all, the image exemplifies how male bodies are captured in Klein's photographic work always painted with an overtly erotic and sometimes subversive tone, while still retaining notions of macho masculinity like muscularity, stiffness, and facial expressions connoting concentration, dedication, upset and anger. This aesthetic has recurred throughout his long-time collaboration with Dolce & Gabbana. In his photographic series for the brand, the body and masculinity of the models are presented at an intersection of metrosexuality, homosociality, and homosexual desire. In the section that follows, this thesis provides a homoerotic reading of the campaign which is only plausible due to the interplay of the abovementioned factors.

Klein's works are described as conceptual and lyrical (Dumenco, 2004), therefore it is critical to inspect how he narrates this campaign. This setting is a tailoring house, wherein a group of male models take on characters as customers shopping for bespoke suits. An older man in a white coat, apparently a tailor, is there to assist them. One key aspect of the campaigns Klein has shot for Dolce & Gabbana is the group shot. He generally places a group of models in a single frame. This style, however, causes the narrative of the campaign to feel odd and strange. This paradox lies in a fundamental property of bespoke tailoring, whereby the tailoring process generally exercised in a one-on-one manner. This is because each suit is made for *a* customer. Nevertheless, the male models act as advisers to each other in this campaign. The idea of offering advice to one another resembles how many women shop – going out with their other female friends, who offer fashion tips, gossip and emotional supports. In a similar manner, men shopping in a group for a sleek suit brings to mind the television series *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* – inspired by metrosexuality and effected by the fashion and mannerism of gay men. Klein's group shot aesthetic hence taints the men of this particular narrative with slight connotations of femininity and gayness.

This thesis turns now to the construction of the image. There are five figures in the image divided into two groups. The group on the left side consists of two seated models, one drinking coffee and another looking in the direction of the other group of three: a tailor in a knee length white coat; a semi-naked model only wearing underwear, socks and shoes; and a fully dressed model. The composition of the image and its depth perception make viewers feel as if they are sitting next to the model show in only his side profile. Viewers' attention subsequently follows his gaze towards the group on the opposite side, though it is hard to tell which one of the three subjects his gaze lands on. In other words, this ambiguity offers the model various subjects to look at and identify with. He may identify himself with the tailor due to his desire to touch the naked model's body; he may want to be the dressed model, who is possibly in a romantic relationship with another man; or he may want to be the underwear model himself, pampered by others. This variation in viewing manners is not exclusive to the model – it is for all readers. This sends a message to readers that they may look at anyone or everyone if they so desire.

The semi-naked model is the highlight of this image for the reason that he is the only one not fully clothed. His chest is being measured by the tailor, while he closes his eyes and frowns slightly. This creates furrows in his forehead, making him look uncomfortable or even upset. The podium beneath his feet does not convert him into a Roman sculpture waiting to be worshipped. Rather, in context of contemporary consumerism, he looks more like a commodity going through a quality control procedure than an unearthed artefact. This is emphasised by the tape measure used by tailor, as well as the white 'laboratory' coat associated with medical and scientific professionals. The tailor is the one in the power position and his job is to make sure this model's chest is the right size for his buyer. The man in the waistcoat is gently touching the underwear model's neck, while fixing his gaze on 'the order he placed'. The worry shown on the underwear model's face may be caused by the possibility of rejection due to his not-good-enough physique. His body is not only successfully commodified, but is designated to fulfil another man's desire. A homoerotic reading of this image arises from the overt commodification of the model's body, as well as the indication of male-male desire.

Instead of 'desiring' the undressed model, the gentle touch from the model in the waistcoat may in fact be a show of support for his friend, who looks rather unimpressed with his own body. This is similar to sports players petting one another for encouragement or comfort during sports games. What is being captured here is then an exhibition of *homosociality*. This is a term referring to the 'social bonds between persons of the same sex'; it is widely used in investigating 'male friendship, male bonding, and fraternity orders' (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p. 1). Homosociality is one of key aspects of this analysis because it is where discourses on culture and sexuality conflate, opening up the space for homoeroticism to slip in. Dolce & Gabbana are renowned for encoding Italian cultural codes, in particular those of Sicily, the birthplace of Domenico Dolce, into their designs and advertisements (Dolce & Gabbana, n.d.). Consequently, representations of masculinity in the fashion house's campaigns are shaped by Italian culture wherein male-male intimacy is not a taboo. It is not uncommon to see men walking arm-in-arm on the streets in Italy. In southern regions of Italy, like Sicily, cheek kissing between two men is also socially accepted. Therefore, the representation of homosocial bonds in this image resonates with the brand's Italian heritage.

While referring simply to relations between men, homosociality is often interpreted as a mechanism for heterosexual men to retain their position of power over other masculinities within the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014; Vänskä, 2017a). It is a nonsexual bond involving homophobia, the sexual objection of women and competition between men. In a similar manner, the centrality of heterosexuality is observed in metrosexuality. Straight men's fashion practices are still being regulated by 'the regime of surveillance of the panoptical gaze' (Rinallo, 2007, p. 89). Reassurance of masculinity is needed to safeguard men from any disapproving gaze from members of their social network. It is true that Beckham is into fashion, yet his heterosexuality is constantly scrutinised by other straight men. It is his working-class upbringing, Hells Angels-esque tattooed torso and romantic relationship with Victoria Beckham that help retain his heterosexuality. It is important to emphasise heterosexuality in an all-male environment. The model sipping his coffee while looking beyond the photographic frame functions as the symbol of heterosexuality in this image. He adopts a conventional representation of heterosexual men in fashion advertising – a man performing an activity, in this case, drinking coffee. Furthermore, his manspreading and lack of interest in the other men connote orthodox norms of manliness. Consequently, he becomes the traditional male figure with which straight men may identify in fashion adverts.

Hammarén and Johansson (2014), however, argue that a structuralist interpretation of homosociality is overdetermined, resulting in 'the conflation of fluid masculinities with an overarching structure' (p. 8). According to them, *bromance*, a term describing intimate relations between men in popular culture, offers an alternative reading of homosociality. As an extension of homosociality, bromance differs from conventional notions of masculinity, which heavily focus on hierarchy and competition. Rather, it 'slips between the boundaries of sexual and nonsexual relationships,' opening up a social space in which men may enjoy intimacy, asexual friendship and love without being perceived as gays (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p. 6).

> **A whole generation of young men feel comfortable taking man-dates out together, saying 'I'm gay for' a male celebrity they like, and generally pressing man-, bro- (and dude-) into service for new words signalling that their straight-maleness is secure. The eagerness is refreshing, and telling. Everyone wins when no one is afraid to appear to be something that was never wrong in the first place. (Greene, 2015, para. 8)**

By stressing nonsexual aspects, bromance still emphasises the heteronormative aspects of homosociality. Despite this, some researchers, with the help of queer readings and the concept of the continuum of homosexual desires, have found that the distinction between homosociality and homoeroticism is neither evident nor assured (Chen, 2012; Hammarén & Johansson, 2014; Vänskä, 2017a). Moreover, rigid boundaries between homosocial bonds and romantic relationships are problematic from the standpoint of poststructuralism. Compared to vertical homosociality, which emphasises hierarchy and competition, a poststructuralist reading of homosociality reveals a horizontal homosociality, whereby interpersonal relationships between men are developed and underscored.

> **If there were no longer societal policing of sexual orientation ... men would be able to have friendships with other men regardless of either party's sexual orientation. ... The potential for fluidity in relationship forms would increase, and friendships and romantic relationships would not need such rigid boundaries. Men would not need to categorize people in terms of "friend" or "potential lover," but would instead have a singular category of relationship in which they could both provide and receive intimacy and care. This proposition would also undermine sexual fluidity as a woman-specific construct, and permit men to experience more fluidity in both relationship forms and sexual relationship partners. (Chen, 2012, p. 262)**

This allows the gazes of non-heterosexuals, particularly gay men, to discover potential romantic relationships in male-male relations. A queer reading of the interaction between the models in *figure 4.* is then plausible. Indeed, heterosexuality does not guarantee a 'gay-free' or 'no-homo' status. Straight men the subject of many gay men's sexual fantasies. This is evident in some of popular gay pornography genres, for example *Str8* and *gay for pay,* in which actors are branded as straight men performing homosexual acts. To gay readers, the intimacy displayed in this image moves past asexual male friendship and into the realm of homosexual desire, teasing a romantic bond between men.

Despite conventional links between heterosexuality and masculine symbols, such as the suits worn by male models in this image, Vänskä (2017a) argues that 'every subject's original state of being is polymorphous perversity' (p. 162). After shifting into the realm of homosexual desires, various homoerotic interpretations may be generated by readers. For example, the model in a waistcoat is pictured with his left hand in his pocket. This directs the viewers' gaze towards his groin. His bulge may not be visible, yet his buttocks are nonetheless emphasised by the lighting. The light reflecting from the mirror in the background outlines the silhouette of his fit and round arse. Additionally, the image of a naked model wearing only boxer shorts, dress socks and dress shoes surrounded by a group of men in suits connotes another popular trope in gay adult films – men in the office. The double meaning of men's suit, functioning as a symbol of masculinity and as a genre of gay pornography, constitutes a homoerotic stimulus in this image. Moreover, gay men with a sock fetish may be further gratified by the fact that the model still wears his socks while standing otherwise mostly naked. Poststructuralism affirms an individual's agency in the construction of meaning. Accordingly, representations of bromance are inevitably subject to the homoerotic gaze. Homoeroticism can be read in fashion visuals focusing on homosociality by adapting the continuum of homosexual desires that underlie male-male relations. Having discussed how supposed asexual and heteronormative homosocial relations could be homo-eroticised in this section, this thesis now moves on to the next two sections, which address explicit homoeroticism in fashion advertising through two opposing styles.

5.2.

Spornosexual: Walk out diresctly from a gay porn

Models are depicted as modern incarnations of Roman wrestlers in an editorial shot by one of the most acclaimed fashion photographers, Mario Testino, for the *Man About Town* 2017 Fall/Winter issue. All seven shots in this editorial follow the same format, featuring two male models grappling with one another. In the first image of the series (*Figure. 5a*), the title of editorial 'VENI VIDI VICI' (I came, I saw, I conquered) is placed between the models' crotches, drawing the readers' attention to their underwear as well as their genitalia underneath. The famous quote, attributed to Roman dictator Julius Caesar, 'double-speaks' to readers. While the theme of this photographic series is in fact a historical reference to Roman wrestling, the underlying meaning of this quote is the sexual connotation of their battle. The model in the black singlet has his underwear dragged lower due to the intense fight, exposing his flexed upper glute and abdominal oblique. Furthermore, his right thigh is between the legs of the other model. The meaning of 'I conquered' thus transforms from taking control over foreign lands to taking control over another man's bodily territories – his body, his role in sex, his manliness and his subjectivity.

On the other hand, the theme of wrestling itself pornifies the image in the same way as the quote. Wrestling is perceived by many gay men to be a homoerotic activity – two men in tight-fitting spandex singlets fighting with one another to get into a superior position, a symbol of power and control. Wrestling has been a common subject in homosexual arts for its ability to convey the forbidden intimacy between men (Cooper, 1994). In the essay titled *Underling Homoeroticism in Wrestling* (2014) published on *Vice*, Baltimore based artist and photographer Ben McNutt wrote about why wrestling is a homoerotic sport:

> **These men wear tight-fitting singlets, garments, or nothing at all. If they do wear clothing, it is tight against their torsos, chest, and thighs, revealing the shapes of their often muscular bodies. They fall, roll, dip, and jump onto the ground, which acts as a platform for each wrestler to pin their opponent against. They grab, touch, pull, and push one another. These men are physically strong. Their muscles are on display for their opponents and viewers alike. Neither member appears to have boundaries on where they will and won't go in order to gain dominance. Their bodies are pushed up against one another as hard as they will go. They use their strength to exert control over their opponents' bodies. Sweat drips onto the floor, themselves, and one another. Each limb is entangled around another. Their arms are wrapped around thighs, biceps, and stomachs. The pace is fast and forceful. In a split second, anything can change. One wins, and one loses.**

Each grappling technique in wrestling can be read as sex play between two muscular men because of suggestive postures and movements. The homoerotic charge is further enhanced by spandex singlets highlighting the existence of the wrestlers' penis. Wrestling is a fetish for many gay men to such an extent that wrestling also has its own category in gay pornography. By tying together the quote with the theme, Testino's photograph successfully homo-eroticises the models' bodies.

The aggression, dominance and virility exhibited in the sport of wrestling also appear in the model's white vest top. Although it seems to be ripped and torn by the opponent in an intense fight, one may notice that those slits and tears are in fact intentionally designed elements of clothing due to the ribbed finishes on edge of every rip. The left nipple of the model is visible to viewers through the rip. Its presence is accentuated, framed by the vest top and the model's left arm. In addition, the twisted fabric of the vest top is reminiscent of rope bondage, an erotic practice commonly focusing on interpersonal dynamics involving dominance and submission. Besides, it is not rare that partially exposed bodies are, in some situations, more sexually appealing than fully clothed ones (Reichert, 2003). The partially clothed and 'restrained' upper body of the model is thus more homoerotic to some readers by virtue of its subversive connotation. From this perspective, the models in the image are not vying for victory in this match. Rather, they are competing for the role of 'master'.

The pornification of male bodies is more intensified and excessive in *figure 5b*. A white space with a word 'VENI' on it intentionally covers the lower bodies of both models. Two other shots from the editorial have similar white spaces with VIDI and VICI on them, also covering the body parts of the models. As discussed earlier, the quote connotes (aggressive and passionate) sexual intercourse between two men. Furthermore, the white blank itself acts as a censor bar in pornographic materials, leaving readers to question what lies behind it. Moreover, readers can see the naked glute of the headless model in the top left corner, underscoring the idea that the other model is also fully naked. Even though the model with his face shown is pinned down by his opponent, his facial expression does not exhibit anger or distress like Laocoön's in *Laocoön and His Sons*. His eyes are closed, and his mouth is slightly open. Together with his head held off the ground and his left shoulder subtly rounded, the model's bodily movement may be read as enjoyment of the sexual gratification brought on by foreplay, rather than being in agony because of the wrestling. Additionally, the outline of both images is distorted, resembling cut-outs from muscle magazines. The cut-outs and other forms of male pin-ups served gay men's sexual desires before the emergence of the Internet. As a result of the semiotic explanation of the censor bar and irregular outline, the layout itself becomes a pornographic 'frame'. In addition to the content of the image, the pornification of male bodies stems and derives from the frame of image. Both visuals encroach upon the boundaries between fashion imagery and snapshots of gay pornography.

It is suggested that the composition of a homoerotic fashion image meticulously guides viewers' attention and gaze to a male model's body, even with only a part of the body is shown. Hicks (2003) suggests that 'the anonymity provided by the headless, faceless torso is reminiscent of much gay male erotica' (p. 240). The white blank space in *figure 5b.* notably cuts both models' bodies into pieces, like parts of an unearthed Roman statue. One model has only his arms and a small part of his hip and thigh captured in the image. The other's body is more intact, with

his face showing. While Hicks does not criticise the fragmentation of models' bodies in the advertisements, others argue that it is how fashion photography and advertising objectify, fetishize and commodify parts of a model's body that facilitates viewers' voyeurism (Merskin, 2006). The image of dismembered male bodies disrupts the models' integrity of autonomy, manliness and masculinity, leaving only sensuality, fantasy and sexual desire attached to their bare chests, pumped biceps and squeezable butts.

Both images feature muscular, mesomorphic bodies connoting properties of orthodox masculinity, such as power, strength and dominance (Stern, 2003). The topless model's upper torso in *figure 5b.* is like those impeccably carved marble sculptures by Renaissance masters. His chest hair, however, reveals that he is mortal. Body hair is one of visual codes linked to manliness in conventional understandings of masculinity. Its constant absence in fashion advertising reflects the pursuit of youth and androgyny by the fashion industry as well as by the gay community. In addition, well-trimmed models in fashion adverts are attractive boys who do not threaten heterosexual men. Their androgyny is to de-emphasise the idea of *man-man* relationships (Soldow, 2006). Hence, the presence of hair on the models' chests, legs and abdomens restores their manliness and corporeality. At first glance, the bodies in both images are ideal bodies that straight men can identify with and inhabit without the danger of being perceived as gay. Although there is no cliché of an effeminate gay man being dominated by his masculine partner, the muscular bodies of the models, like those of gay clones, are saturated with gay desires and fantasies. Unlike male bodies in androgynous marketing, these muscular bodies do not hide their homoerotic aspects. Instead, they illustrate a new shift of masculinity in the fashion industry and popular culture. It is a masculinity that embraces commodification, sexualisation and pornification of men's bodies – the *spornosexual*.

'Spornosexual' is a portmanteau of 'sportsman' and 'porn star' invented by Mark Simpson to describe the evolution of the metrosexual (Olesker, 2015). Compared to their previous metrosexual version, spornosexual men pay more attention to 'their painstakingly pumped and chiselled bodies, muscle-enhancing tattoos, piercings, adorable beards and plunging necklines' and less to clothes (Simpson, 2014, para. 13). This reflects a phenomenon stemming from the *sporno* culture concerning the proliferation of hypersexualised advertisements or promotional materials featuring professional athletes (Olesker, 2015). Spornosexual men regard their bodies as a kind of fashion accessory, while the online social media platforms like Instagram and YouTube become favourite marketplaces to sell 'hard-working' narcissism (Olesker, 2015).

Glossy magazines cultivated early metrosexuality. Celebrity culture then sent it into orbit. But for today's generation, social media, selfies and porn are the major vectors of the male desire to be desired. They want to be wanted for their bodies, not their wardrobe. And certainly not their minds. (Simpson, 2014, para. 17)

Two decades after the invention of the term 'metrosexual,' the core aspects of his lifestyle – hedonism and narcissism – still dominate the fashion industry's approach to male customers. With the widespread usage of social media, a new generation of young men have grown up with countless images of narcissist men embedded in their minds. They are confronted with a plethora of diverse representatives of masculinity daily, both on the street and on the Internet. An almost naked male model on a massive billboard no longer bothers, let alone shocks, these men. On the contrary, shredded bodies on *Men's Health* covers have become a new standard of physique and beauty for many millennials. Flexing muscles after an intense workout session is a new cultural norm, and taking a selfie in the gym locker room has become a necessity for one's social life. The body of the spornosexual in the digital era is an image, a commodity and a brand. According to Miller (1992), the priority for men's pursuits of the mesomorph body was different for straight men and gay men. The former deployed his heft as a tool and the latter displayed his body in terms of an image. However, when the differences between the body as a tool and as a narcissistic image gradually disappeared, the possibility of distinguishing between these two reasons for having a muscular body became almost inconceivable (Jobling, 2014). The boundaries between straight and gay men's bodies blur, as does the target audience for contemporary fashion campaigns. For this reason, practice of subjectivation becomes complicated and tricky for heterosexual men. As the trend of spornosexual reveals, many straight men find that having a mesomorphic, homoerotic body is in fact both desirable and 'profitable'. One of reasons for them to post *thirst trap* pictures on their social media is because they know that their bodies are sexually attractive to gay followers. The homoerotic body is now the subject of all kinds of desire: sexual gratification, commercial potentials, physical improvement or self-confidence boosters. The homoerotic body is for all to look at and consume.

So far, this section has focussed on decoding homoerotic signs, that is, how to *read* homoeroticism in fashion adverts. This thesis will now expand the analytical toolkit by introducing another investigative angle that addresses how can one *feel* homoeroticism. The lighting choice of and post-processing of both images results in a highly saturated and contrasted effect, making models' grips significantly more noticeable. Take *figure 5a* as an example: the index finger of the model in the white singlet presses deeply onto the other model's triceps and his palm is against the other model's forearm. The clear texture of muscles accentuates notions of power, strength and the corporeality of the body. On the contrary, the other model's right hand is gently placed on the bare waist of the model on the ground. While this may be a result of his right arm being pushed away, this gentleness could also be interpreted as affection between two lovers. The sense of touch or tactility is indeed an essential element constituting the homoerotic climate in this campaign. Instead of consciously 'reading' the image, a reader's memory of touching and being touched is subconsciously aroused by looking at this visual. It is the workings of *affect* that accentuate the homoeroticism in the image. As one of the three components of the human mind, affect refers to 'any experience of feeling or emotion, ranging from suffering to elation, from the simplest to the most complex sensations of feeling, and from the most normal to the most pathological emotional reactions' ("Affect," n.d.). Since the 1970s, many communication scholars have been concerned with the role of affect and emotion in interpersonal communication, the public sphere, mass media and popular culture. It

is argued that 'under less demanding circumstances,' such as reading a newspaper, holding a daily conversation or watching television, human beings do not utilise much of their 'precious resource of attention' (Donohew, Sypher, & Higgins, 1988, p. 2). In other words, it is more likely for readers to not use their full thought process in a familiar situation like reading a fashion magazine or seeing fashion campaigns on the street, because the cognitive process normally activates only in the event of new information or danger. Affective response is hence the main drive motor of a reader's reaction in the aforementioned circumstances. That is not to claim, however, that cognition does not play a role in the process of reading fashion images. Rather it merely underlines the great 'importance of arousal-inducing elements in attracting and holding an audience' (Donohew et al., 1988, p. 3). This complex relationship between the physiological response caused by the corporeal body and the interpretation of signifying codes operating on the social and cultural knowledge has challenged the perceptions of many social scientists as to how humans perceive visuals.

The sensory processing systems of human beings integrate information from different sensory organs and receptors. The integration of sensory systems, such as sight, olfaction, gustation and audition, creates a *perceptual synthesis* that establishes the functional knowledge required for humans to understand the surrounding environment. Moreover, one sensory input may trigger additional sensory output, physiological change or emotion arousal in what is called *cross-modal association*.

When we look at a representation of the body, we perceive it in terms of our own experience of embodiedness. We don't simply 'read' the postures and gestures that a body assumes, we map these postures and gestures onto our own body, feeling them in our own skin and bones, muscles and viscera. (Shinkle, 2008, p. 222)

For example, body horror is a horror movie subgenre which aims to induce disturbing, unnerving and abject feelings in cinema audiences through the use of abominable and gruesome visuals related to mutilation and violence. Whilst viewing these scenes, audiences map the visual input onto their own bodies, thereby experiencing the pain and suffering depicted on the screen. In a similar manner, vision is not the only sense activated when a viewer sees a body in a fashion campaign; other sensory apparatuses are activated by the visual feed as well.

When looking at a fashion image, viewers connect vision with their own memories to experience the tactility of the fabric, posture of the model and feeling of every other element presented in the image (Featherstone, 2010; Shinkle, 2008). Browsing fashion images is then a situated practice, as well as an act of embodiment, for the reason that viewers will apply any object, posture or movement in a fashion imagery onto their own bodies. Fashion photography operates on this link between the sensual and the social by evoking viewers' tactile and sociocultural memories of wearing, posturing, touching and feeling. These memories link to the arousal of emotions and other physiological reactions to induce the cerebral pleasure that occurs when one sees an erotic image.

That seemed to reach out to me, interrupting my mundane but peaceful Sunday morning, and provoke me into erotic consciousness, whether or not I wanted it. … His body isn't a stand-in phallus; rather, he has a penis – the real thing, not a symbol, and a fairly breathtaking one, clearly outlined through the soft jersey fabric of the briefs. It seems slightly erect, or perhaps that's his non-erect size; either way, there's a substantial presence there that's palpable (it looks so touchable, you want to cup your hand over it) and very, very male. (Bordo, 1999, p.168-171)

Viewers' somatosensory sense and memories of past sexual experiences are generated through looking at *and* feeling fashion advertisements. In a similar manner, viewers can be aroused by seeing erotic images like *figures 5a.* and *5b.*.

Coded meaning and affective responses are both crucial to how an individual perceives fashion imagery. It is these complicated interactions and relations between cognition and affect that inform a viewer's experience of seeing. If an affective response, like sexual arousal, is provoked by perceiving homoerotic fashion adverts, it could be that viewers are engrossed by the memory of their last time touching another man's body. It could also be that the semiotic implications of a male body signify a potential sex act, an attraction to virility and masculinity or a forbidden desire. In most cases, it is the working of both; they are intertwined and inseparable. A reader's affective response therefore cannot be ignored or neglected in an investigation of homoeroticism in fashion advertising.

So far, this thesis has only featured only mesomorph bodies in visual analyses. It is evident that macho homoeroticism is still prominent in today's mediated world. For example, image sharing social media platforms like Instagram are swarm with countless gay spornosexuals. Yet, the muscular male body is not the only body type that is titillating and arousing to gay readers. It is necessary to address alternative modes of homoeroticism in fashion advertising. Accordingly, the following section moves on to investigate how homoeroticism can be read in a fashion advertisement featuring ectomorph bodies popular in the high fashion industry and likewise attractive to many gay men.

5.3.

Queering homoeroticism: He's so hot because he's campy

This image (*figure 6.*) capturing two slender models in make-up and frivolously lavish garments was selected from Palomo Spain's 2017 Fall/Winter campaign series titled *Objeto Sexual*. Palomo Spain is a Spanish fashion brand, forged by its creative director Alejandro Gómez Palomo, is acclaimed for it fusion of masculine traditions and feminine aesthetics. His work proposes a rethinking of the way in which men dress themselves. With his interest in craftsmanship, notably men's tailoring techniques, Palomo has created collections incorporating frivolous and glamorous styles, with quirky cuts and traditional details. The brand has been labelled as a genderless, gender-bending, or queer in different fashion publications. While it is debatable which term is the most adequate describing the brand's aesthetic, it is safe to say that the brand does not conform to gender conventions in men's fashion. Likewise, gender nonconformity recurs in the works of Kito Muñoz, the Madrid based photographer who shot the campaign. In Muñoz's photographic series for Palomo Spain, the sexuality of the models transcends conventional boundaries to transform into 'visual fire, revolutionising gender, stereotypes and normative masculinity' (Pérez, 2018, para. 4). Erotic signs permeate every shot and in the body of each model in this campaign. The subversive pleasure of being free and 'queer', the sensuality of men's bodies and the visual fantasy of fashion coalesced into a homoerotic paradise in *Objeto Sexual.*

Both models in *figure 6.* have the sought-after aesthetic of high fashion brands: lean builds and boyish looks. 'Modelling is an aesthetic practice producing some bodies as "attractive" or "beautiful" favoured by high fashion brands, yet they do not necessarily correspond to the conventional beauty codes of men outside of the fashion industry (Entwistle, 2009, p. 200). Instead of conforming to hegemonic masculine aesthetics, many model agencies and fashion brands require their models to present an 'edgy' or 'quirky' look, such as the skinny, boyish models cast for Dior Homme and Raf Simons in the early 2000s (Woo, 2016). On the other hand, age is arguably another significant property in modelling. Teenagers as young as 15 or 16 have been scouted by agents and casted for high fashion brands like Louis Vuitton, Paul Smith and Calvin Klein. Entwistle (2009) contends that body aesthetics in the fashion industry's now correspond to that of gay men. A fascination with youth in the gay community has indeed been observed and discussed by many social scientists and gay writers. Some believe that the decaying body's association with the AIDS epidemic has led to the pursuit of youthfulness by gay men (Cole, 2000; Filiault & Drummond, 2007; Levine, 1998). While this explanation remains debatable, a young, smooth and slim body certainly is an attractive and erotic subject for many amongst the gay community.

In previous chapters, this thesis addressed the aesthetic of the gay clone popularised in the 1970s and 80s. The legacy of sexualising male bodies through bodily management and specific dress codes is still seen in today's fashion advertising. Yet, the clone has not been the only popular aesthetic amongst gay men since the 1990s. According to Filiault and Drummond (2007), a new masculinity featuring a ectomorph body had emerged by the late 1990s and early 2000s as an alternative idealised representation of the self for gay men. This new masculinity, termed *twink,* broke away from the working-class fashions and hyper manliness favoured by gay clones, subscribing instead to high fashion looks and youthfulness. In addition to their slim contour, twinks embody a boyish look and hairless body. This soon become one of the most common types in the gay community, later branching off into several variations: Euro twinks, twunks (a portmanteau of twink and hunk), femme twinks, and so on (Haramis, 2018). Like other gay male types, the popularity of twinks is reflected in gay pornography to the extent that there are several adult film studios, such as BelAmi, Helix and Eurocreme, producing videos mainly featuring twinks. Therefore, both models in Palomo Spain's campaign have the slender twink body, which not only corresponds to the body beautiful demanded by fashion industry, but also to the erotic gaze of many gay men.

While one should be careful not to conflate the mannerisms and body types of gay men, gay twinks are commonly associated with characteristics such as effeminacy, submissiveness and vapidity (Kornhaber, 2018). Rather than rebelling against such stereotypes, Palomo Spain's campaign takes them a step further by including other feminine components – both models wear makeup and wear beaded and embroidered dresses with feathers. The flamboyant and extravagant style that *plays* incongruous contrast of masculinity and femininity is reminiscent of many screen and music personalities: fictional singer Brian Slade in his *The Ballad of Maxwell Demon* music video in the movie *Velvet Goldmine* (1998); glam rock musicians David Bowie and Jobriath; and transvestites Jack Curtis and Candy Darling in Andy Warhol's *Flesh* (1972).

What is illustrated here is the technique of *camp*, a technique employed by many gay men to expose the incongruence between their own life experiences and those of heteronormative society.

> **Camp, through its introduction of style, aestheticism, humor, and theatricality, allows us to witness "serious" issues with temporary detachment, so that only later, after the event, are we stuck by the emotional and moral implications of what we have almost passively absorbed. (Babuscio, 1993, p. 28)**

Camp is 'a relationship between activities, individuals, situations, and gayness,' that is to say, a performance that can only be identified by those with the subcultural capitals and knowledge (Babuscio, 1993, p. 20). Moreover, it is a performance in *style* that *plays* with prevailing gender norms and 'accepted' sex roles in society. The irony and humour in camp is derived from an exaggeration of various opposites in society, exposing the incongruence between gay men and social constructions (Babuscio, 1993; Drukman, 1995; Dyer, 2002). By overemphasising outward appearance, the technique of camp in fact reveals the very superficial aspects of these suppressive social constructions. Therefore, straight acting (passing) gay men, gay clones and fairies (gay men whose mannerisms are very feminine) are all variation of styles and characters gay men adopt in the real-life theatre.

The art of camp is a means of emancipation and defiance for many gay men to handle a harsh environment that perceives them as abnormal and immoral (Drukman, 1995; Dyer, 2002). For example, many contestants in the popular reality show *RuPaul's Drag Race* emphasise that doing drag has empowered them. Yet, because of its overly parodistic and humorous aspects, drag may also be regarded as a turn-off. Herring (2016) nevertheless disagrees with the universal assumption that camp is incompatible with homoeroticism, arguing that 'camp can provide gay men with an entry into sexual desire rather than exit' (p. 6). This can be seen in the case of gay porn parodies. One example of this was a 2016-17 series called *A Gay XXX Parody,* produced by Men.com, that adopted popular cinema or television sensations like *Star Trek*, *X-Men* and *Game of Thrones*. The series even featured plots inspired by the mobile game sensation Pokémon GO and the 2016 Calvin Klein Underwear campaign featuring pop artist Justin Bieber. Camp has allowed gay men to shift their gaze 'between objects of scopophilia and subject of ego-identification' (Drukman, 1995, p. 96). On the other hand, the exaggerated feminine style of Palomo Spain's campaign may even broaden the spectrum of non-heterosexual desires. On *Queer Eye* star Antoni Porowski's drag makeover YouTube video, one of the most upvoted comments reads 'being attracted to Antoni AND Eva Cado [his drag persona] at the same time as the bisexual disaster I am' (paprika schildkroete, 2019). Therefore, instead of being a buzzkill, camp can indeed be sexually attractive and erotic to some readers.

Gay aesthetics and theatricality are on display in the lavish and glamourous fashion style of the Palomo Spain campaign. While the see-through dresses worn by both models connote femininity, they also elevate the sensuality of their bodies as a result of the affective response of seeing bare skin addressed in the previous section. Beneath the diaphanous dresses, the underwear and bulges of both models are visible, particularly the model on the left. The distinct shape of his genitalia is more than a phallic visual – it offers an almost accessible and touchable penis.

Male underwear has been aligned with contemporary notions of male sexuality and sexual pleasure. Rather than playing down the male body as the site of sexual desire, underwear has incorporated the male body as a complex of sexualised attributes. (Craik, 1992, p.136)

This was certainly true in the similar case of breeches, an item of Romantic masculine fashion that clung to the lower body of the wearer for 'increased the visual importance of the male body from knee to the waist, with particular emphasis on the genital region' (Hollander, 1993, p. 226). Although this emphasis was to demonstrate the male body as one more authentic and truthful than its female counterpart, the erotic undertone stands out as the viewer's gaze is inevitably guided to the wearer's penis. The concealing feature of the model's underwear enhances the sexual appeal of the male body rather than desexualises it.

Similarly, the tactility of feathers and chiffons triggers a somatosensory reaction of viewers. This sexual arousal stems from the psychological link between feathers and the act of tickling, known as *knismolagnia* or *titillagnia*, a sexual fetish for arousal through excessive tickling. In addition, Muñoz's arrangement of the camera angle places viewers' gazes in a low position, giving an effect of looking up at each of the models. This creates an illusion that viewers are either sitting or kneeling in the middle of three-way sex. The fingers of the model on the left form a circle, offering a peephole for viewers to see and discover what has been waiting for them – group sex with both models. The gazes of the models towards the viewers are seductive – viewers are being looked at by their erotic gazes. In other words, mutual homoeroticism is manifested in this image.

Another approach to the homoeroticism presented in *figure 6.* is *sexual embeds*, which have been widely investigated in the psychoanalytic framework by many feminist or fashion writers (for example, see Bordo, 1999; Hicks, 2003; Jobling, 1999). Sexual embeds refers to subliminal signs in advertisements that fly beneath the reader's radar. They are either 'perceptible images of nonsexual objects' or 'imperceptible sexual words and images' incorporated into adverts by media professionals intended to subconsciously arouse those viewing the ads (Reichert, 2003, p. 25). In the case of Palomo Spain's campaign, both male models wear dresses that blur the outline of their body contours, making them appear as two decorated erect phalluses. The homoerotic embed is derived from two symbolic phalluses touching one another in the image. Moreover, the models' bodies make contact only 'from the waist down,' where the anatomical penis of models are located. A multi-layered sexual embed is encoded in both the virtual and real penises of the image.

Nevertheless, the issue with sexual embeds is that it is not clear how influential they are to readers or whether the media professionals really do intentionally incorporate these undetectable signs into advertisements. From a psychoanalytic standpoint, on the other hand, the body-as-phallus in fashion imagery connotes the powerful position of white, middle-class men in a hierarchical society. According to psychoanalysts, the pleasure of seeing a virtual phallus for male readers arises from identification with the power symbol and the formulation of one's ego. This approach, however, has been criticised by many writers for its transhistorical explanations and emphasis on fixed gender differences (Nixon, 1997; Vänskä, 2005). In the Palomo Spain campaign, the phalluses are decorated in beads, sequins and feathers, representing a subversion of the hetero-centric power structure. The erotic charge of this image lies, to many gay men, in its very 'unmanly' components: the twink body, the art of camp and the idea of sex with two or more men.

In short, despite lacking the visual signs of conventional masculinity in fashion adverts in a way that could easily make heterosexual men uncomfortable and threatened (Elliott, R. & Elliott, 2005), the exaggerated femininity in the Palomo Spain campaign talks to gay readers who find feminised male bodies sexually enticing. Its homoeroticism is not located in structuralist or psychoanalytic understandings of homosexual relationships. 'Discourses constitutes subjectivities and power relations and, therefore, there is benefit in promoting discursive resources that can be used to reconstruct or promote alternative – and hopefully less problematic – subjectivities' (Pringle, 2005, p. 272). By drawing upon poststructuralism and queer reading, it is possible for this thesis to open up the space for variations in homoeroticism in fashion advertising to be investigated on a wider and broader scope, such as the campy eroticism addressed in this section.

5.4.

Digital era: Romantic image, erotic text

In the last section of this chapter, this thesis returns to the image (*figure 1.*) featured in the introduction from the 2015 Calvin Klein Jeans Fall/Winter campaign shot by Italian photographer Mario Sorrenti. The campaign features over a dozen of photographs as well as a one-minute video titled *Calvin Klein Jeans Fall 2015 – The Full Story*. According to *Dazed*, this advertisement was branded by Calvin Klein Jeans as 'an innovative sociological experiment turned fashion campaign' (Stansfield, 2015). The staging for the campaign comprised of male and female solo figures, as well as different straight, lesbian, gay and three-way pairings. Every shot featured a mock chat window with suggestive texts indicating the figures in the image had been *sexting* each other or someone else. While *Figure 1*. is the only image in the campaign featuring a male homosexual couple, both models also appear in the video between 00:18 and 00:32. The scene involving the gay pair is set in an office, with the model in the jumper working late at night while receiving and sending messages for a hook-up with a stranger. Instead of showing the content of the sext in an imitated chat window, their conversation is either demonstrated in written or verbal add-ons in the video. The contexts of their conversation in the image and the film are nevertheless essentially the same: they are in the process of arranging casual sex through digital dating.

The model in the jumper sits limply on a table, arching his back slightly and showing signs of openness and welcoming to the other model. The feeling of the jumper is soft and gentle, which may refer to what he likes in sex. On the other side, the semiotic meaning of the leather jacket, worn by the other model, is conventionally associated with dominance, sadism and manliness. From the perspective of gender role theory, this contrast between clothing corresponds to sex roles in a gay relationship, with the model in the jacket playing the man, while the model in the jumper plays the woman. The employment of gender roles is problematic, however, because it fails to address the dynamics of sexuality and the shifting of the gay gaze. This thesis therefore analyses the homoerotic charge of this image from the angle of gay sensibility, which stems from the life experiences and social practices of gay men.

This campaign demonstrates how fashion advertising consolidates both a visual utopia and an identifiable reality into a pictorial format to create a fantasy for consumption previously discussed in this thesis. Nevertheless, even though it focuses on daily scenes of online dating in today's world, the image does not present the theme in a natural or authentic way. It is a deliberately set up and edited image of two young and beautiful Caucasian models, both whose faces are clearly photoshopped or 'elevated'. The lighting manages to accentuate the sculpture-like profiles of both models, recreating the scene of Narcissus falling in love with his own reflection. Their boyish looks cater to the pursuit of youthfulness prevalent in both the fashion industry and amongst gay men. The affection (or lust) between the two is visibly intense. While there is no room for others to disrupt, readers are still allowed to project themselves onto the model of their choice. Although these models do not look back at readers seductively, readers are aware that they are both into men. In other words, these two models are available subjects for gay desire, and any gay man viewing the image 'has a chance' with them. This concept of availability constitutes one aspect of the gay sensibility. Confirming whether someone is *batting for the other team* is a part of the gay life experience. In heteronormative society, men are presumed to be straight except in specific spaces like a gay bar and bath house. This campaign is designed to be read gay; thus, it secures a 'public' space for gay desires without the need for double reading or insider interpretation by gay men.

Unlike fashion photography in the 1990s, which constructed realness and authenticity in fashion images by adopting aesthetics of the snapshot and family album, this image illustrates a glamorous and dreamy side of fashion in which all is splendid, flawless and beautiful; it is an image in which viewers may immerse themselves in a commodified fantasy tinted by a homoerotic filter. Yet the most powerful sexual tension in the campaign lies in the text. The text functions as the reminder of reality and the life experience to many gay consumers. In both the visual dimension and textual realm, the homosexual intimidation in the image both unites the dichotomous properties of fashion photography and conflates its gay audience's boundaries of the virtual world and physical world, where they see this image on the street or on a mobile phone. While the image itself is no more real than any other fashion image where all the texts are *only* inspired by real stories, it is more *open* and *explicit* in portraying the lives of gay men. Clark (1991) suggests that the advertising industry will eventually adopt a more direct and explicit approach to target their homosexual customers once capitalism has successfully created 'material conditions for homosexual desire and identity' (p. 191). This campaign is indeed the result of the commodification and materialisation of gay men's desires in Western consumer culture.

The inclusion of sexting and dating apps demonstrates that this campaign is aimed at a new generation who grew up in an environment where online dating is a part of everyday life. 'Through this campaign, we're creating an emotional connection with today's technology driven generation, highlighting the new normal channel for modern meet-ups,' said Melisa Goldie, chief marketing officer of Calvin Klein (Stansfield, 2015). Furthermore, the campaign highlights the normalisation of publicly-displayed gay desires in fashion adverts, a move which was once considered risky by many professionals in the marketing industry. As opposed to the visual, homoerotic arousal is indeed more obvious and substantial in the texts; this thesis now will move on to decode homoerotic signs in the sext of the image. Sext is a word combining sex and text. According to Cambridge Online Dictionary, to 'sext' means 'to send text messages that are about sex or intended to sexually excite someone' ("Sext," n.d.). Despite this, gay male users of online dating apps such as Grindr or Hornet frequently employ linguistic strategies to avoid mentioning 'sex' directly in conversation, due to the social stigma associated with casual sex and promiscuity (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; Jaspal, 2017). Euphemistic terms or abbreviations like 'fun,' 'NSA' (no strings attached), or 'FWB' (friends with benefits) are instead employed by seekers of casual sex. In the case of the Calvin Klein Jeans' campaign, the text 'U wanna?' sent by Felippe is a stand-in for the question: 'Do you want to meet up for sex (now)?'. A reply reading 'Possibly' is then sent to Felippe by an anonymous message receiver with whom viewers can *possibly* identify. In the video, this is replaced by a one-word question: 'Looking?', with the answer 'Depends, send pics'. *Looking* is a term frequently used in conversations of gay men on online platforms because its more nuanced meaning. It can 'indicate or verify that one is seeking an immediate sexual encounter,' 'what one seeks on the app' or 'what one is not looking for on the app' (Birnholtz, Fitzpatrick, Handel, & Brubaker, 2014, p. 8). Understanding the usage of these euphemisms and their nuanced meanings constitutes one's gay sensibility and knowledge, and thus one's 'membership' in the gay community.

In an investigation of interactions in online MSM (men who have sex with men) spaces, Jones (2005) points out that there are conventions, or procedural rules, to the sequence of interactions. After greeting one another, gay men proceed to the phase of information exchange, which is sometimes unnecessary on mobile dating applications because users can include statistics like height, weight and race in their profiles. Next is another stage in which participants negotiate whether they want to send any pictures (if they do not have any on their profile) or additional pictures to the other person.

> **The spectacle offers himself up for evaluation, for consumption, and thus depends upon the look of the other for his existence. Though there is often a certain pleasure involved in making oneself a spectacle, there is also considerable vulnerability. (Jones, 2005, p. 87)**

The process of exchanging photographs of one's face, body or genitalia constitutes a ritual in the realm of online dating for gay men. In the image, Felippe's request for the other man's private photos was rejected at first. Whether a user grants another user permission to access his private pictures is the result of a risk evaluation as well as a power play. Furthermore, in the case of this image, Felippe's counterpart might be playing hard to get, a teasing strategy that builds expectation and draws out excitement. In other words, the negotiation of an exchange of private photos functions as foreplay to boost sexual tension between users, as is the case in the Calvin Klein Jeans' campaign.

After exchanging private photos, the anonymous user seems satisfied with Felippe's pictures. He replies with 'Lets,' meaning 'Let's meet up.' Felippe replies with another one-word question: 'Now?'. Although the sext stops there, the photograph and video take over the narrative, affirming that they do eventually meet up. The image is a snapshot of their encounter, while scenes in the video show them passionately touching, kissing and undressing each other. Through the cooperation of text, image and video, the sequence of an online hook up is completed in this campaign. Felippe and the other model's textual and visual bodies transform into physical ones. Furthermore, the text 'raw texts, real stories' below the Calvin Klein Jeans brand logo is placed right next to the end of the chat, double talking to readers and suggesting that the pair might *have it raw*, that is, have sex without using a condom. The overt erotic essence of bareback sex, to many gay men, indicates factors like a somatosensory experience, emancipation from the stigma of AIDS and the reciprocity of trust. The double reading of the term 'raw' hence acts as another catalyst for homoeroticism embedded in the image.

Lastly, homoerotic arousal registered in the sext is accentuated with the window framing the content of sext. It becomes a censoring bar like that in the *figure 5b*., covering the groin part of both models and leaving viewers wondering if the models' trousers are unzipped. The idea of having sex with upper body still being fully clothed connotes *public sex* in semi-public spaces like toilet cubicles, parks, cars, roadsides, and indeed an empty office at night, as is depicted in the image and video. This association with public sex heightens the erotic charge of the campaign. This is because the act of public sex is, on one hand, regarded as immoral, lewd and indecent behaviour by many; on the other hand, a fetish for others (Kohn, 2016; Lynch, 2018). Furthermore, public sex, or cruising, has been a subcultural and historical facet of gay culture as it 'provides a rare avenue for intimacy due to its anonymous nature' in the times when gay men were being prosecuted and criminalised (Lynch, 2018, para. 11). The sexually exciting aspect of anonymity in cruising recurs in gay men's usage of online dating applications as well as in this campaign. Most of the aforementioned erotic codes are based on gay men's cultural knowledge when it comes to online dating. This corresponds to the idea that shared knowledge or subcultural capitals are critical in constructing meanings in communication, in this case homoeroticism.

Calvin Klein is well known for its marketing strategies that sexualise and 'exploit' youth culture. For example, American actress Brooke Shields, who was 15-year-old at the time, was filmed saying 'Do you know what comes between me and my Calvins? Nothing' in the brand's controversial 1980 advertisement, which was later banned by some television channels (Vänskä, 2017a). Nevertheless, this campaign did not have the same shock effect as its predecessors. The fact that not even a few eyebrows were raised at this campaign demonstrates, understandably, that depictions of sexual or affective intimidation between models of the same sex in fashion campaign have lost their novelty. The younger generation hardly thinks twice when seeing two men making out on the street. In addition, today's mediated world is pervaded with sexually charged visuals and erotic signs. Homoeroticism is no longer an uncharted territory in which fashion brands and advertisers need to exercise extreme caution and care.

5.5.

Limitations and future work

There are a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, from the perspective of poststructuralism, every reader interprets a text or an image individually on the basis of their cultural knowledge and living experiences. There is neither a universal gayness nor a gay reading that can transcend all racial, class, gender and cultural boundaries. This indeterminacy, '*a priori* of ultimate undecidability' in the words of Drukman (1995, p. 92), opens up the possibility of diverse interpretations and queer homoeroticism. It rejects a universal explanation of what is homoeroticism as well as how does it operate in fashion advertising. Therefore, readers should bear in mind that this thesis is based on only one person's reading and they may have interpreted these images differently.

Secondly, the current investigation only examines fashion adverts produced by European and American brands and publications. This thesis is therefore limited within a 'Western narrative' that has already been challenged and broken down by other fashion commentators and social scientists (Jenss, 2016). It is unfortunate that this thesis does not include any fashion adverts featuring non-Caucasian models. This thesis recognises that sexuality intersects with other identities such as class, race and nationality, however, it is better to save the cultural and racial aspects of homoeroticism in fashion advertising for examination by future research with a more comprehensive view. It would be interesting to compare homoerotic bodies within different racial and cultural groups as well as examine how these differences are demonstrated in fashion adverts targeting at those groups. For example, further research may investigate homoerotic fashion advertisements from countries like Japan, Thailand or Taiwan, where homosexual intimacy can be displayed publicly, but overtly sexualised homosexual bodies are still rare in mass media. Further research could additionally inspect how homoerotic elements may slip into fashion advertisements published in countries where male-male intimacy is still a taboo.

Finally, while the main research tool employed by this thesis is semiotic reading, another possible approach would be the affective response briefly addressed in the visual analysis of the editorial VENI VIDI VICI. This thesis pointed out that there have been many communication studies investigating how influential and powerful physiological factors can be in regard to human perception of visuals. Further research could be conducted to understand readers' affective responses to homoerotic fashion images, as well as its links to viewers' cognitive understandings of homoerotic signs. This would allow the construction of a more comprehensive overview as to how homoeroticism operates in fashion advertising.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this investigation was to inspect how homoeroticism functions in contemporary fashion advertising. Employing Foucault's concept of discourse, this thesis situated selected images within the discourse of sexuality in today's world. Originally, homoerotic semiotics could only operate when readers are equipped with the required knowledge, sub-cultural capitals in the words of Bourdieu, which stems from experience of life as a gay man. Nevertheless, with the rise of LGBTQ movement and the emergence of the Internet, the general public has obtained a better understanding of which visual codes may have homoerotic connotations. Individuals outside of the gay community are also aware of these erotic codes, hence the fashion industry has less need of double/dual marketing strategies. Meanwhile, the desires of gay men have been commodified and materialised by capitalism, transforming from a deviant subject to a product in the online shopping cart. Fashion campaigns may now communicate to gay men both openly and explicitly.

Homoerotic content in fashion adverts has also become more explicit and daring. Fashion advertising has always walked a tightrope, tracing a link between the romantic fantasy of fashion and the pornographic objectification of the body. Because capitalist consumerism causes consumers to crave more, fashion advertisements have understandably inched closer to hardcore pornography. While there are already some campaigns with imagery akin to screenshots of gay pornography, it would appear that explicitness of homo-sex in fashion advertising will only continue to increase in the future.

This investigation has also suggested that there lies a more inclusive homoeroticism in fashion advertising through the analysis of Palomo Spain's campaign. Many non-macho members of gay community have caught the media's attention, and a more diverse representation of gay men has been presented. While musculature is still worshipped by the many gay men who consider the masculine body as a prerequisite to the dating game, rising publicity for alternative and non-macho gay men has forced many to rethink just what kind of body is homoerotic. Homoeroticism has thereby become queerer in today's fashion advertising. There lies also a possible area of future research on alternatives to macho homoeroticism.

This thesis has demonstrated that homoerotic codes can be found in fashion advertisements by means of various investigative approaches. In other words, there is always a possibility for the erotic gaze of gay men to slip in fashion images featuring male bodies. Moreover, the continuing sexualisation of the male body in mass media has eroded boundaries between the bodies of straight and gay men. This causes heterosexual men to consider erotic representations of themselves. By emancipating the gazing system from a structuralist gender dichotomy, this thesis agrees that the position of the observer is now available to anyone. Both men and women, no matter what their sexual identity is, can inhabit the gaze of gay men and make remarks in the vein of 'I would totally bang him if I were gay' in the comment section of a homoerotic fashion image. The body is thus no longer heteroerotic nor homoerotic, but simply erotic.

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Figure 6. Muñoz, K. (2017). Palomo Spain 2017 Fall/Winter campaign [Photograph]. Retrieved from http://fuckingyoung.es/palomo-spain-fallwinter-2017-campaign/

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to people who helped me bring this thesis into reality:

To my supervisor Annamari Vänskä for her immense knowledge, consistent guidance and patience.

To all my friends in the FaCT programme and Department of Design, as well as fellow members in the thesis tutoring group, especially to Sadie Trigueros for her insightful critiques.

To my dear friend Daniel Rodabaugh for proofreading and improving my text.

To Pia Parjanen-Aaltonen, master of printmaking workshop, for her comtinous support and incredible knowledge in risograph printing.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for their unending support.

2019

Aalto University